

MOTOR CYCLIST

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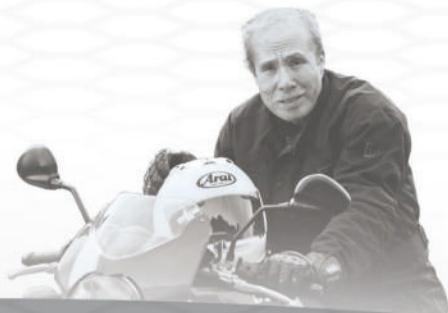


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HONDA'S 6-CYLINDER CBX

THE ALL-NEW

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We **push design and technology relentlessly**, which is why the all-new Corsair-X is the most advanced helmet we've ever built. Its more rounded shape, totally new Variable Axis System (VAS) shield, and updated venting offer new levels of protection and comfort. All of which explains why millions of motorcycle enthusiasts and racers choose Arai, and have for more than six decades.



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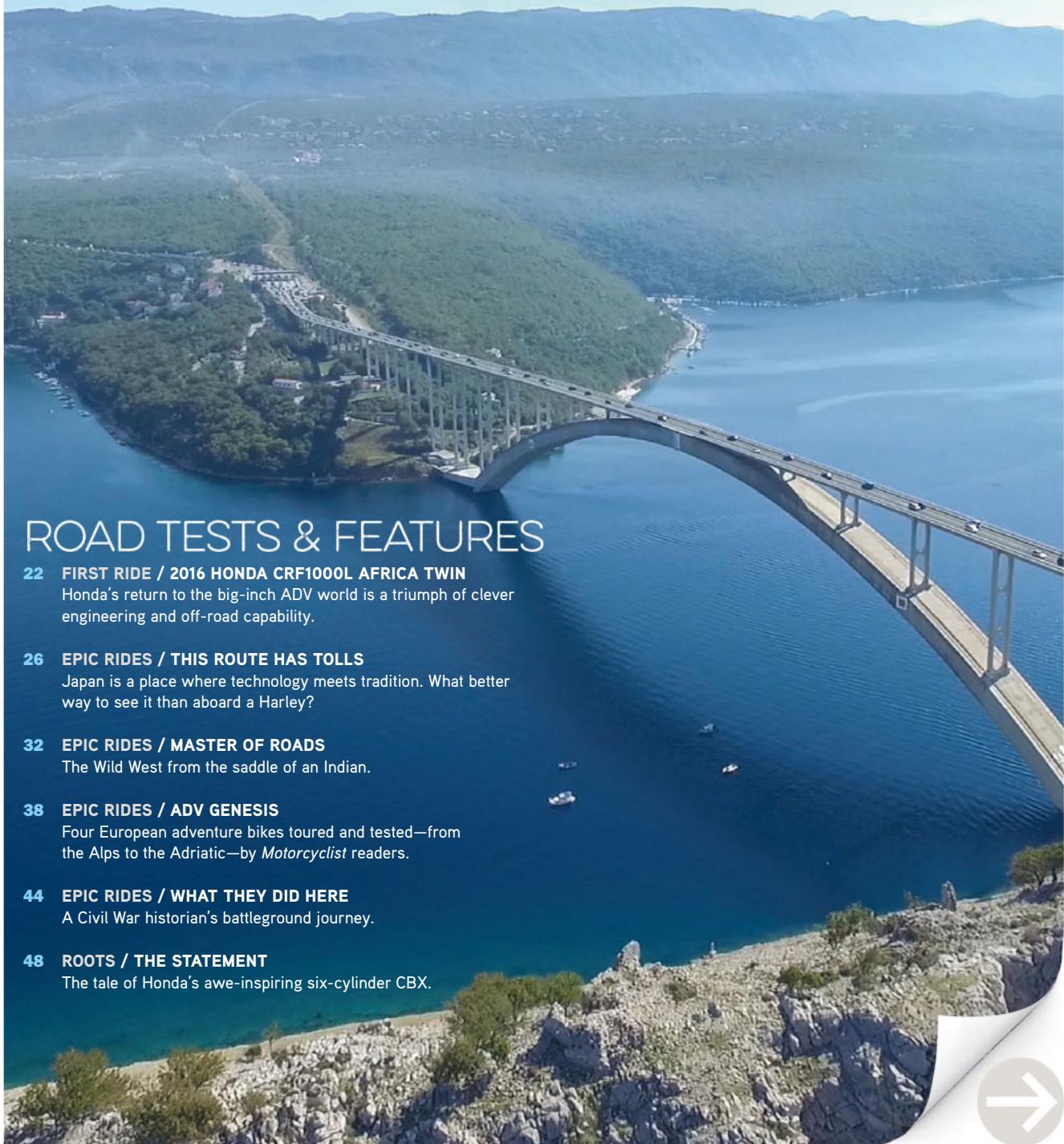
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INSIDE...

APRIL 2016



ROAD TESTS & FEATURES

22 FIRST RIDE / 2016 HONDA CRF1000L AFRICA TWIN

Honda's return to the big-inch ADV world is a triumph of clever engineering and off-road capability.

26 EPIC RIDES / THIS ROUTE HAS TOLLS

Japan is a place where technology meets tradition. What better way to see it than aboard a Harley?

32 EPIC RIDES / MASTER OF ROADS

The Wild West from the saddle of an Indian.

38 EPIC RIDES / ADV GENESIS

Four European adventure bikes toured and tested—from the Alps to the Adriatic—by *Motorcyclist* readers.

44 EPIC RIDES / WHAT THEY DID HERE

A Civil War historian's battleground journey.

48 ROOTS / THE STATEMENT

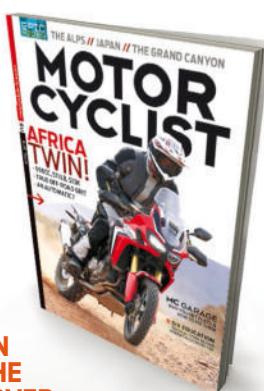
The tale of Honda's awe-inspiring six-cylinder CBX.

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 COOK'S CORNER**
- 10 ME & MY BIKE**
- 12 CRANKED**
- 14 CODE BREAK**
- 16 DRAWING THE LINE**
- 18 MC MAIL**
- 54 GEAR: Get Lost!**
- 56 MC TESTED**

MC GARAGE

- 58 TO PLUG OR NOT TO PLUG**
What the experts say about emergency and permanent tire repairs.
- 62 STREET SAVVY:**
Situational Awareness
- 64 RETAIL CONFIDENTIAL:**
4 Peeves Of The People
- 65 HOW TO:** Permanently Repair A Tubeless Tire
- 66 DOIN' TIME**
- 70 SMART MONEY:**
2009–2013 Harley-Davidson Electra Glide Ultra
- 74 MEGAPHONE:**
Your Bike Sucks!

**ON THE COVER**

Senior Road Test Editor Ari Henning airs out the new Honda Africa Twin at the model launch in—where else?—South Africa.

MOTOR CYCLIST

SINCE 1912 / MOTORCYCLISTONLINE.COM

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WHERE WILL YOU GO THIS YEAR?

Let's assume you're like us. Your motorcycling has to fit into (and around) your work and home life—yes, we also have families and commitments and even (gasps!) drive cars. Not every year contains a two-week riding vacation, camping in the American Southwest, slaloming through about a thousand hairpin turns in the Alps, traipsing around Japan, or following the tragic but ultimately fascinating events of America's Civil War in the mid-Atlantic states—all, incidentally, elements of our Epic Rides special section this month.



Harley's Road Glide
lives for the relaxed
pace of inquisitive
touring, here on
CA's Highway 25.

Sometimes you make do. Sometimes you find a crack in the otherwise packed schedule and wedge a ride into it—remembering, of course, that not every journey outside of your work/life radius has to be half a planet away to be called epic.

Example: A few days before I was to leave for Santa Cruz, California, about 400 miles up the coast from home, to attend a press function with Zero Motorcycles, my wife suggested a ride-along. "Why don't I join you? Work isn't pressing, and I love Santa Cruz," she said. She already knew that I was planning to take a testbike there rather than accept the plane ticket—because, well, it's riding—and that bike happened to be Harley's new Road Glide Ultra, more than capable of the journey.

Our ride up was pleasant, not as cold as I'd feared it would be (though we were both prepared with heated vests), and without the forecasted rain. The return on a Saturday was more leisurely because we had no time constraints, so we started with a hot breakfast in Santa Cruz and a plan to stay off the major highways as best we could.

Martha had never been down Highway 25 between Hollister and San Miguel, and I'd only done it in the summer and fall. We

knew it was the right decision as soon as we cleared the suburban sprawl south of Hollister. "Oh, my, this is so beautiful," Martha cooed over the headset. "I feel like I've never seen this part of California."

We chased a ribbon of pavement through valleys bracketed by deep-green foothills, normally brown in winter and fall but alive with color after winter rain. Cattle gazed at us. Ground squirrels skittered. Clouds formed and dissipated on the horizon.

For two and a half hours and 102 miles we gamboled down a spit of ever-narrowing road, seeing almost no other vehicles, to a running commentary on the astounding variety of our home state even as it was a little hard to believe we were still in it. We talked about the ride for days afterward.

The point? This small escape was right in front of us, needing only the desire to make this Harley into more than a pure transportation tool. It's all about frame of mind, an opportunity seized. Make your next ride epic, even if it's close to home.



HEY, WHAT ARE THOSE WEIRD LOGOS?

The navigation gurus over at Butler Maps have created Rever, a website and mobile application built specifically for creating, tracking, and sharing motorcycle rides. Integration of the site and app are excellent, allowing a user to build a ride online (as you might in Google Maps) then link it to the mobile device to follow the self-created route.

We tapped "track" in Rever on this round of Epic Rides (starting on page 26) for a couple of reasons. First, it's fun to have documentation of your ride—from exact roads to average speed and elevation data. Also,

we wanted our rides to be available to anyone. If you head over to motorcyclistonline.com/epicrides you'll see links to all of this year's Epic Rides, turn by turn, and by joining Rever (membership is free) you can ride our routes as well as create and share your own epic journeys.

—Zack Courts

MARTHA COOK



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ME & MY BIKE

1976 Yamaha XT500C

NAME

John Bekanich

AGE

61

HOME

Jacksonville, Florida

OCCUPATION

Retired R&D Machinist



 I bought this bike new in February 1976, a few months after I was married. I read Bob Greene's 10-page write-up in the January 1976 issue of *Motorcyclist*, so I knew it would be something special. It was used a lot for commuting to work in northeast Pennsylvania, many times taking the long way home. There were a few off-road excursions, too, and still-present scars on the turn signals and headlight ring are reminders that it weighs 300-plus pounds, and trials universal tires are better kept off rocky trails and on pavement. It's hard to believe now that my wife and I used to spend days off riding two-up through the north Pocono hills in sneakers, blue jeans, and open-faced helmets, without a care in the world.

The original shocks, airbox, and exhaust system are long gone, replaced with Fox shocks, a K&N air filter, and a Bassani/Supertapp exhaust. The engine has never been disassembled. The only maintenance ever needed was oil changes, valve and

cam-chain adjustments, and occasional tune-ups with new contact points and spark plugs to keep the magneto ignition happy.

Over the years and a handful of job-related relocations, it's been rolled out of the way and forgotten, replaced by a variety of more modern motocross, dual-purpose, and streetbikes. Recently I seriously thought about selling it, but my wife of 40 years talked me out of it, saying that whatever it sold for would never be enough to erase the seller's remorse that would surely follow. I knew she was right.

Early retirement in 2015 allowed time for another good cleaning, a carburetor rebuild, and tune-up with fresh oil and gas. Now it's taken on the occasional easy ride on Sunday mornings. I also have a KTM 950 Supermoto for the street and KTM 150 XC for off road, but there's no substitute for 500cc of two-valve thumper torque and the memories that come with it. This time it'll stay out of the dusty corner of the garage for good.

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SUNDRY RIDER

I rode across the country on a motorcycle packing nothing but a toothbrush. I wore the same clothes day after day and slept in abandoned buildings. Hold on a minute; that's not strictly true: In my back pocket I carried a Buck knife that had a locking, 4-inch blade. There are noises in the night, see? The Boogie Man or worse.

One morning I woke up next to a partially decomposed rat crawling with big red ants. It was a setup. I couldn't have committed the murder. Rats don't decompose overnight.

If the buildings in a town were in use I would ride out and lie down in a field to sleep. I didn't bathe or shave. This was long ago, back in my Rag-Boy days.

I don't plan on sleeping rough anymore. Still, I don't like being caught out by "no vacancy" signs, so when I travel long distances I carry a sleeping bag on my motorcycle. Price gouging is another pet peeve. I've been known to spend a quiet evening among the cows to save a lousy 50 bucks. The bag I have now packs down to the size of a football without the pointy ends. It makes throwing a tight spiral difficult.

"Drink enough Crown and the Boogie Man is no longer scary, just misunderstood and a little sad."



Some folks like to travel rough. Some do it as an homage to a simpler time; some do it because they're gluttons for punishment.

From one toothbrush I've slowly gravitated to a pharmacopeia. I have two kinds of blood-pressure pills—one for cholesterol along with an asthma inhaler for when I eat too much dust on the trail. I carry every remedy from Advil to Zyrtec. Ointments include poison-ivy cream, antibiotics, and Benadryl. Then there's underarm deodorant, an electric shaver, sun block, and moist towelettes. I have more cosmetics on my motorcycle than an Estée Lauder counter at the mall.

I'm not nearly as tough as I used to be, so traveling by motorcycle has become a balancing act between the luxury items I want and what I actually have space for. My packing may be getting out of hand though; if I get much more comfortable I'll be driving the car.

Even as a zygote young Mr. Gresh could be heard making vroom-vroom motorcycle noises, albeit very quietly as his mouthparts had not yet formed. It only got worse over time. Now, there's no way to stop his incessant bleating about motorcycles, especially if the topic turns to vintage Yamaha two-strokes.



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IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST PEOPLE,
IT'S NOT FOR YOU.



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LISTENING

During my most active time of instructing I was delivering around 1,000 technical riding briefings each year to our students, which taught me a few things. One was that good instructors and coaches often experience a unique reciprocity of information between themselves and their students—if one listens carefully.

Students think and talk about their riding in a variety of ways. Some are visually oriented, some talk only about the emotions they feel, and others describe their hands-on experiences with excruciating clarity and detail. Others lump their feelings, emotions, and experiences into the same bag with woes and worries or areas they yearn to improve.

My earliest coaching experience in the 1970s (a one-on-one, two-day affair) laid the groundwork for everything that has come since. After working with several dozen riders I concluded that just telling someone what to do was fruitless. The difference between what I saw, felt, and thought, and their perceptions, were vastly different. Consequently, bringing them to their own unique understanding of any particular riding skill was the only hope.

To be clear, there is a place for chalk-talk lectures. This is where riders' understanding of the underlying reasons why they should want to master a particular technical riding point

“Every little hitch, glitch, and error you experience while riding indicates your next area to improve... They are your signposts to improvement.”



Keith talks, you listen. But knowing what to talk about requires a massive amount of listening.

Keith talks, you listen. But knowing what to talk about requires a massive amount of listening.

As I began to give fewer technical briefings and work more closely and individually with our Level 4 students, I realized there was still much to discover. What transpired was more precisely identifying and dissecting the barriers that restrict a rider's ability to improve. Fully understanding a rider's problem involves decrypting their confusion and creating a common-ground

drill, within their individual ability, to solve it.

The net result of this approach has me fired up. So far, an additional 106 new drills and assignments have evolved, bringing the total to 128—each one a tiny slice of a technical skill and each one intended to provide a fresh look and a remedy for the problem the student, along with his on-track coach.

Here's the takeaway: Don't become dismayed. Every little hitch, glitch, and error you experience while riding indicates your next area to improve. Listen to yourself. Welcome your errors; they are your signposts to improvement.

Keith Code, credited as the father of modern track schools, founded his California Superbike School in 1980 and currently operates programs in 11 countries and on six continents. His A Twist of the Wrist series of books (and DVDs) are thought by many to be the bible of cornering.

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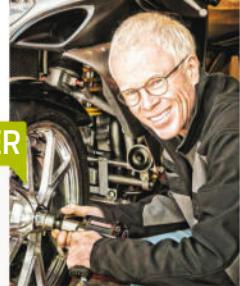


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ADDING A WHEEL

Typically, I haven't had the time or interest to study three-wheelers. But for years I've certainly seen many types of trikes introduced, discussed, and analyzed. All that, plus some personal experience of age-related health issues, has made three-wheelers a subject that I now look at with more understanding.

That said, I still draw the line at trikes having a single front wheel and two rear. I had some experience with a Harley Servicar in college, and I can't see that the Servicar's instability problems have been solved in the more modern Harley Tri-Glides and Freewheelers. I haven't ridden the Can-Am Spyder but understand that the riding feel is in no way a true motorcycle experience.

So it was with at least a partly open mind that when I got a call from Bob Mighell this past fall, saying that he would be in my area with a couple of his leaning trikes, I made the time to discuss the engineering, check out the hardware, and ride one.

Bob runs Tilting Motor Works (tiltingmotorworks.com) in Snohomish, Washington, and has spent about 12 years putting

"The final system geometry in the Trio's case is unique: neither auto nor motorcycle..."



his tilting three-wheel conversion kits into production. That time includes building several prototypes, including a Yamaha V-Max-based bike that set a couple of land-speed records for three-wheelers (about 134 mph) and saw 145 mph at one point, with excellent stability.

The company is now building kits that convert Harley Big Twins and Honda Gold Wings into "Trio" motorcycles. What about the Harley "Penster" patents and prototypes? How is the Trio different? Harley dropped the Penster in favor of the Tri-Glide after a decade or so of development, never reaching completely satisfactory performance. Bob and his team know the basic reasons Harley had problems, based on the Harley patents and on some inside information. Clyde Fessler, the retired H-D marketing VP, now works on the Tilting Motor Works team and understands where the Penster came up short.

The Penster system and the Trio setup look similar at first glance, but a simple description of the difference is that Penster used automotive geometry as a basis while Trio used motorcycle geometry as a starting point. The final system geometry in the Trio's case is unique: neither auto nor motorcycle but using aspects of each. The kit that converts a Harley or Gold Wing into a Trio is impressively designed and manufactured, with beautiful welds and machined parts. The hardware gets a big thumbs-up. But what's it like to ride?

My partly open mind became fully open when I rode the bike, a kitted Heritage Softail. The Trio Softail countersteers like a motorcycle, leans like a motorcycle, and just feels like a motorcycle. The experience is so "true" that I was actually more distracted by my unfamiliarity with the Harley controls and switchgear than I was with any aspect of the front suspension and steering behavior.

Tilting Motor Works makes a kit that converts Harley Big Twins or Honda Gold Wings into "Trio" motorcycles.

For low speeds in parking situations there is a clever optional system called TiltLock that uses a pump and two hydraulic cylinders to level the bike using surprisingly complex software to sense the situation and adjust the cylinder positions accordingly. A handlebar switch activates the system, which I found took some getting used to, but this was only a short ride, and I was still on the learning curve.

The kit is just less than \$10,000 (installation about another thousand, paint extra), with the TiltLock option an additional \$3K. Weight with the kit is up about 100 pounds—120 pounds with TiltLock. For about the same price as a Tri-Glide (using a new bike) you get a machine that gives an experience so close to that of a two-wheel motorcycle that it's hard to see what you are giving up. This is already a success story, the story of technical achievement in making practical application of a pretty complex invention. I certainly hope it moves on to commercial success as well.

James Parker designed his first original motorcycle in 1971; his most recent design is the Mission R electric superbike. In between, he worked on multiple other motorcycle projects, including 30 years spent evolving the RADD front suspension system used on the Yamaha GTS1000 and various other prototypes.

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MOTORACISM, PRO & CON

I laughed so hard at Jack Lewis' "Blessed From the Past" (*Behind Bars*, February/March, MC) and Joe Gresh's "Motoracism" (*Cranked*, February/March, MC) that tears ran down my leg. I sure do want to have a couple of beers with these two wackos!

Sergio Sensini / via email

The opening paragraph of Joe Gresh's column, "Motoracism," is as finely crafted and deeply compelling as anything I've ever read in any publication. Well done, sir.

Herb Shipp / via email

In regards to Joe Gresh's *Cranked* column "Motoracism," I have two words: spot on! Welcome to a truly globalized world, folks. Both quality and crap are made in every country. Just take the time to research without bias—it will make your life that much easier.

Tim Reader / via email

Joe Gresh's admonishment that not buying Chinese-made motorcycles is disguised racism, "mirroring traditional racism," stinks of political correctness. Enough! Just stick to the topic of motorcycles. Other than technical statistics, etc., leave the motivation for buying a particular bike to the reader.

Maj. John Johnston, USMC (Ret.) / via email

I read with great interest the article "Motoracism" by Joe Gresh. I have been riding for 47-plus years and have taken part in the trash talk that goes on between bikers. In that span of riding I have been on almost every type of two- and three-wheeled ride. Harleys, Hondas, racers, sportbike, cruiser, touring, drag, dirt—you name it I've tried it at least once. My trash talking was usually based on my experience and preference.

In all honesty, I have not been on any motorcycle made in mainland China, and if I ever do I will give an honest opinion. But given the chance I will never buy this machine—not because of the manufacturer but for geopolitical reasons. I am a retired disabled military veteran, and the buying public still doesn't understand that China is communist and dedicated to the overthrow of our nation.

Tired of Modern Design, Remembering the GPz & Motoracism Goes Viral!

LETTER OF THE MONTH

AESTHETIC DISCONNECT

I have subscribed to your magazine for 20 or more years. During that time, I've been happy to read about new bikes, retro bikes, gear reviews, the occasional oddball feature. I even read the advertising. But I have let my subscription lapse, and I thought you should know why. There are several reasons, and all are beyond your control.

I find most new bikes to be horrifically ugly. I'm not sure why all designers find the need to operate in lock-step, but when one manufacturer adopts a design aesthetic, all the rest quickly follow. The current design aesthetic, which for a better name I call "many pointy facets," makes the current crop of bikes look like robots from Japanese anime.

I realize that retro bikes (and genuine vintage bikes) are "my market." The Royal Enfield, Triumph Bonneville family, as two examples, are just fine. But the announcement of yet another small tweak to the Enfield isn't much of a story, so most of your content is about new bikes and rightly so. I just don't want to read about them anymore. Thanks for two decades of good reading.

William F. Dudley Jr. / via email

And we thank you for your support all those years. To send you off properly, we're offering the joy of warm, dry feet, thanks to Sidi's Deep Rain boots, courtesy of Motonation (motonation.com). The \$295 Deep Rain boots are a waterproof design borrowing elements of touring and off-road boots for comfort and durability. A Technomicro base combines with a breathable waterproof membrane to make for a less-clammy yet still waterproof boot. Enjoy! —Ed.



I do not willingly buy anything from a country that wants to destroy me. The Zongshen may be the best-built ride in its class, but you still won't see it in my driveway.

Allan Weshnak / Orlando, FL

Joe Gresh's piece titled "Motoracism" was one of the sorriest pieces of journalism ever published. Both he and your editors should apologize for it. Racism is serious stuff. Throwing the word around in snarky humor is grotesque. Shame on all of you. Climb down from your moral high horses and get back on a bike.

Stan Moore / via email

I used Gresh's "Motoracism" page as toilet paper. It was rough but did the job. Spare us your cultural Marxist musings and stick to bikes. If Chinese bikes are the real deal, people will buy them in time.

Tony Powers / via email



LOVIN' THE GPZ

The article about the Kawasaki GPz550 (*Roots*, February/March, MC) reminds me that now is a great time to be into motorcycles. The GPz550 was considered a middle-weight superbike in its day and had these specs: 464 pounds wet, 57 hp, 0-60 mph in 4.9 seconds, and the quarter-mile 12.57 seconds/104 mph. It cost \$2,599, which would be about \$7,485 today. My 2014 Yamaha FZ-09, which cost \$7,900 in April 2014, kicks ass with its specs: 414 pounds wet, 115 hp, 0-60 mph in 2.7 seconds, and the quarter-mile 10.6 seconds. Plus all the other improvements over time that we can take for granted like better tires, fuel injection instead of carbs, better brakes and suspension, and Allen head bolts instead of Phillips screws. So I'm happy. Except that most modern bikes have goofy looks, including mine. I guess you can't have everything.

Mark Griffin / via email



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2016 HONDA CRF1000L AFRICA TWIN

The Africa Twin Is a Win—
On Road and Off



THEY SAY
“Ride anywhere.”

WE SAY
“...as comfortably and capably as the competition but for a lot less!”



→ Americans have been waiting a long time to ride Honda's all-new Africa Twin adventure bike. Fresh in our memory is the year of announcements and carefully timed info leaks, and beyond that there's the fact that the original XRV650 Africa Twin—first sold in Europe in 1988—was never brought to the US of A. American dual-sport riders were on the outside looking in throughout the '90s on up until 2003, when production of the Africa Twin

ceased and the last glimmer of hope for a North American model finally faded.

Or so we thought.

But with the recent explosion of interest in adventure bikes, Honda saw fit to bring the Africa Twin back, and, moreover, it is bringing its new ADV to America. And after spending two days aboard the new CRF1000L Africa Twin (including the Dual Clutch Transmission variant) on the tip of the continent that gave it its name, I'm here to tell you that it's been worth the wait.

One of the things we love about ADV bikes is their roomy ergos, and the Africa Twin fits the mold nicely. The riding position keeps your spine straight, and the bike is slim between your knees, so it's easy to plant your feet on the ground. Honda lists a curb weight of 511 pounds, but the bike feels lighter than that, both when you lift it off the sidestand and while underway. The CRF1000L is certainly a full-size machine with a tall appearance, but it's not so large that it's intimidating for someone without

pro-level balance and not so tall that it's unapproachable for shorter riders. Honda lists the basic seat height as 33.5 inches in the lower of two positions, but the Africa Twin doesn't feel that tall in use.

It doesn't look like that little windscreens or those radiator shrouds would do much in the way of blocking the wind, but they do. A 45-minute downpour painted a clear picture of the Honda's aero. Despite the steady rain, my torso and thighs remained dry, as did my hands behind the stock brush guards. The air that does reach the rider is clean and well managed. The Africa Twin spent a fair amount of time in a wind tunnel, and it shows.

While most manufacturers are equipping their ADV bikes with 1,200cc engines (or larger, in the case of KTM's new 1,301cc Super Adventure), the Africa Twin's parallel twin displaces just 998cc. Its listed output of 94 hp and 72 pound-feet of torque (that's for the European model since Honda doesn't divulge power figures for US bikes) is well below the status quo for open-class ADVs, but it's more than enough to get the job done. (In case you've forgotten, BMW lists the R1200GS engine at 125 hp, and KTM says the 1190 Adventure twins make 150 hp.) Even better, the engine has good character, makes totally linear power, and spins smoothly until just before the rev limiter kicks in above 8,000 rpm. Honda says the bike gets about 50 mpg, which means the 4.9-gallon tank should net a range of more than 200 miles.

Handling is stable (as tested at over 220 kph [138 mph]) but perhaps too stable. The Africa Twin doesn't display the quick-flick, happy-to-lean characteristics we've come to expect from tall, relatively narrow-tired



EVOLUTION

Honda applies the legendary Africa Twin name to an all-new ADV.

RIVALS

Aprilia Caponord Rally, BMW R1200GS Adventure, Ducati Multistrada 1200 Rally, KTM 1190 Adventure R, Moto Guzzi Stelvio, Suzuki V-Strom 1000 Adventure, Triumph Explorer XC, Yamaha Super Ténéré.

ADV bikes. It's a bit slow to lean over, and in tighter turns the front end felt numb enough that I decided to slow my pace. It might be something as simple as tire choice or suspension settings, or it could be the result of using dirt-friendly wheel sizes—the Africa Twin wears a 21-inch front, whereas most of the big ADVs have 19s. But whatever the case the Honda wasn't as enjoyable in the twisties as I'd hoped, even though the brakes and motor are definitely up to the task.

Anyone willing to shell out another \$600 and deal with an additional 23 pounds can get the Africa Twin with a DCT (Dual Clutch Transmission), which does away with the clutch and shift levers in favor of automatic, computer-controlled shifting based on several selectable parameters. The system works well most

of the time—freeing the rider to relax and focus on other things, says Honda—but once the pace picked up on a twisty road the shift timing was off and downshifts were more abrupt than they would have been if I was in control. There are triggers by the left grip that you can use to override the computer, however, and they're actually pretty fun to play with. DCT might not suit my style of riding (admittedly, I tend to ride quite aggressively), but if it makes motorcycling more accessible and draws more folks into the fold, then it's all right with me.

We rode some graded gravel roads on our first day, and I used the opportunity to assess the bike's standard ABS and HSTC (Honda Selectable Torque Control, which is Honda-speak for traction control). A button on the dash disables rear ABS (you

DCT FOR THE DIRT



A Dual Clutch Transmission on a big dirt bike? We had our doubts, but Honda's automatic transmission is a real boon in rough terrain. As with Honda's street-oriented DCT setups, this one has S (sport) and D (drive) modes, with D providing optimal fuel efficiency and S offering stronger acceleration via delayed upshifts and faster downshifts. Shift action in S mode can be fine-tuned by selecting one of three response levels. Off road, a G (gravel) switch offers more direct clutch engagement (the system normally feathers engagement), and the DCT alters shift behavior (delaying upshifts while climbing and downshifting earlier while descending) based on whether the ECU determines you are traveling uphill or downhill.



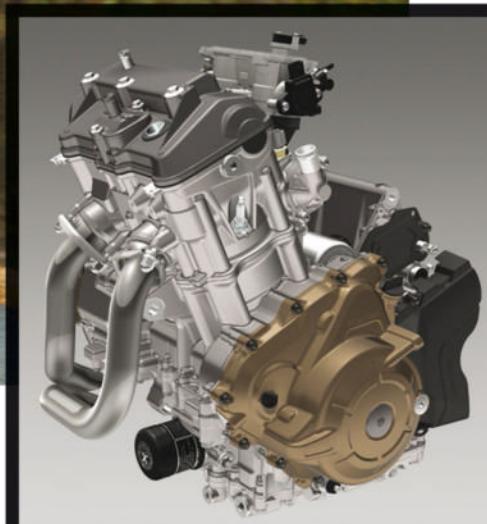
The Tri-Color Africa Twin has HRC-inspired graphics and gold wheels, just like the original 1988 model. It's a stunning bike, but, sadly, that colorway isn't coming to the US for 2016. Is it 1988 all over again?! North American dealers will carry the CRF1000L in Rally Red and Digital Metallic White.

have to be stopped first), and the HSTC has three levels plus off, which are selectable on the fly via a trigger on the right switch cluster. The HSTC modes are quite distinct, with Level 1 (the most permissive) allowing a high level of wheelspin. Being able to slide and spin the rear tire while still having front ABS is hugely beneficial, and the Honda system is calibrated to keep you safe but also let you ride hard and have a good time. Annoyingly, both ABS and HSTC reset themselves every time you turn the bike off.

Switchable ABS and HSTC are both strong indicators that Honda actually wants owners to take the Africa Twin off road, and Honda joins big-timers BMW and KTM in offering highly useful off-road electronics. Throughout the press launch Honda personnel reiterated that the Africa Twin is meant to be a do-it-all bike, and that includes legitimate adventure riding. To that end, on the second day of the launch they outfitted the bikes with Continental TKC 80 knobbies and released us on a loop route on a large farmstead.

Once again I was pleased with the Africa's low seat, high bar, narrow waist, and contoured tank since they let me move around freely, whether seated or standing. The bike's massive amount of steering lock also became evident off road and should be a big plus in suburbia as well. Engine power and character are well suited to off-road work—torque is strong right off idle, but there's not so much power that the tire spins up uncontrollably, and big, lurid power slides are a cinch on this bike because the engine is so tractable. I'll admit, though, that with its modest power it's not easy to wheelie the Africa Twin with the manual trans, so adventurers will need to seek an alternative route if they encounter a line that requires lifting the front wheel.

The bike's light and compact feeling transfers to the dirt, and I had a great time sliding, jumping, and generally riding the bike as hard as I felt comfortable considering the distance to the nearest hospital. With 9 inches of fork travel and 8.6 inches of rear-wheel travel the Africa Twin tracks



CRAFTED FOR COMPACTNESS

All previous Africa Twins were powered by V-twins (first in 647cc and later in 742cc), but now there's an all-new 998cc parallel-twin engine. Honda chose a parallel-twin design due to the packaging benefits, and a 270-degree crank is employed out of appreciation for the layout's power characteristics and sound. The motor has a single-cam (Unicam) head design, as seen on the CRF motocrossers, and a semi-dry sump for reduced engine height. Amazingly, the CRF1000L mill is the same width as a CBR500R's engine. That compact design permits greater design freedom, contributing to the bike's low center of gravity and great dynamic balance. There's a claimed 9.8 inches of clearance under the engine, but Honda still wrapped the headers along the bike's flank for protection, while a robust aluminum skid plate shields the sump and forward-mounted oil filter.

true over rough surfaces, so I never felt the need to steer around ruts, sand, or rubble while flying across the desert. And no matter how hard I ran the bike into rain bars and dips I wasn't able to bottom the suspension, which is adjustable for spring preload, compression, and rebound damping both front and rear. It's safe to say that when it comes to off-road riding, the Africa Twin is no poseur.

After a stint on the standard bike I took a DCT machine out for a lap of the desert course. I wasn't thrilled with the technology on the street, but I was surprised by how beneficial it was in the dirt. In fact, I rode faster with the DCT than I did with the standard clutch! For me, the biggest benefit was in tight corners following fast straights, where the automatic transmission made initiating slides (with aggressive downshifts via the shift trigger) effortless. It also made the transition from sliding the rear tire to spinning the rear tire much easier because all you have to do is lift off the rear brake and roll on the throttle. You can't stall the DCT bike, and throttle pickup is very consistent (in G mode, see the "DCT For The Dirt" sidebar) so low-speed maneuvers are less stressful as well. However, even in the most aggressive mode the transmission often upshifted earlier than I would have liked, while other times I would spin tire into the rev limiter and the system wouldn't upshift until I rolled out of the throttle.

If I were buying an Africa Twin though, I would still go for a manual-trans bike simply because I like being engaged with the motorcycle. Even so, I think it's great that this technology is so helpful off road, even for an experienced rider like myself. And it's sure to be a benefit to riders just joining the ADV craze who have relatively little off-road experience.

Speaking of buying an Africa Twin, you'll be able to pick one up in June. The standard bike is listed at \$12,999, while the DCT-equipped bike is \$13,699. In case you need some perspective, the next-cheapest bikes in the big-bore ADV class are Suzuki's \$13,999 V-Strom 1000 Adventure and Yamaha's \$15,090 Super Ténéré, and neither of those machines is nearly as good off road. Power figures notwithstanding, this is one of the more capable and well-rounded bikes in the ADV category, and it's also the most affordable.

Yes, we've waited a long time for the Africa Twin, but it's finally coming to the US and it's better than we ever imagined.



Radial-mount four-piston calipers pinch 310mm rotors (left) that look small only because they're framed by a 21-inch front wheel. Does that face (below left) look familiar? It should. Honda was careful to retain the original Africa Twin's countenance, albeit with modern LED lighting.

TECH SPEC

PRICE	\$12,999 (\$13,699 with DCT)
ENGINE	998cc, liquid-cooled parallel-twin
TRANS/FINAL DRIVE	6-speed/chain
CLAIMED POWER	94.0 hp @ 7500 rpm
CLAIMED TORQUE	72.0 lb.-ft. @ 6000 rpm
FRAME	Steel semi-double cradle
FRONT SUSPENSION	Showa 45mm fork adjustable for spring preload, compression, and rebound damping; 9.0-in. travel
REAR SUSPENSION	Showa shock adjustable for spring preload, compression, and rebound damping; 8.6-in. travel
FRONT BRAKE	Nissin four-piston calipers, 310mm discs with ABS
REAR BRAKE	Nissin two-piston caliper, 256mm disc with ABS
RAKE/TRAIL	N/A
SEAT HEIGHT	33.5/34.3 in.
WHEELBASE	62.0 in.
FUEL CAPACITY	4.9 gal.
CLAIMED WEIGHT	511 lb. wet (534 lb. wet w/ DCT)
AVAILABLE	June 2016
MORE INFO AT	powersports.honda.com

VERDICT

A worthy successor to the legendary Africa Twin, a terrific motorcycle on road and off, and a good value on top of all that.



THIS ROUTE HAS TOLLS

Sake, Sakura, and Sushi: On Tour in Japan

WORDS & PHOTOS: Alfonse Palaima

Imagine a place where the Department of Transportation posts radius information before every tightening radius on the expressway. Or one that mounts convex mirrors in every blind corner to reduce head-on collisions...even in the backcountry! Sound like a rider's paradise? It is!

In the land where the Z-car was born, ingenuity and craftsmanship lead around every corner between points A and B. This is a journey through the land of the rising sun, pinched between opposing traffic on the right and cyclists to the left. Why anyone would choose to be here with four wheels is hard to understand—this place is built for motorcycles!

GAIJIN IN A FOREIGN LAND

In advance of my visit to Japan, in doing my research on licensing needs, rider restrictions, parking regulations, etc. for a motorcycle tour in Japan, I found an online forum

of foreign-born (Gaijin) riders living in Japan and figured that to be the perfect resource for local information. So I made a date to meet up with a few of the members to ride together and share tall tales from across the seas. Little did I know they would put together a small gathering of riders, a few roads, and a collection of climates to test me. Seven hundred kilometers later I'm returning to Tokyo after nearly 16 high-speed hours in the saddle... But that's less in miles right? Either way, it was one hell of a day ride!

After nearly three early morning hours southwest along the Tomei Expressway, almost all the way to Nagoya (incidentally, a \$43 toll!), I'm late due to a burning automobile pileup that blocked all four lanes. The group I'm scheduled to meet (at a 7-Eleven) is unfazed by my late arrival and moves north toward Nagano before I arrive. Before I find them along Route 362, however, I stumble

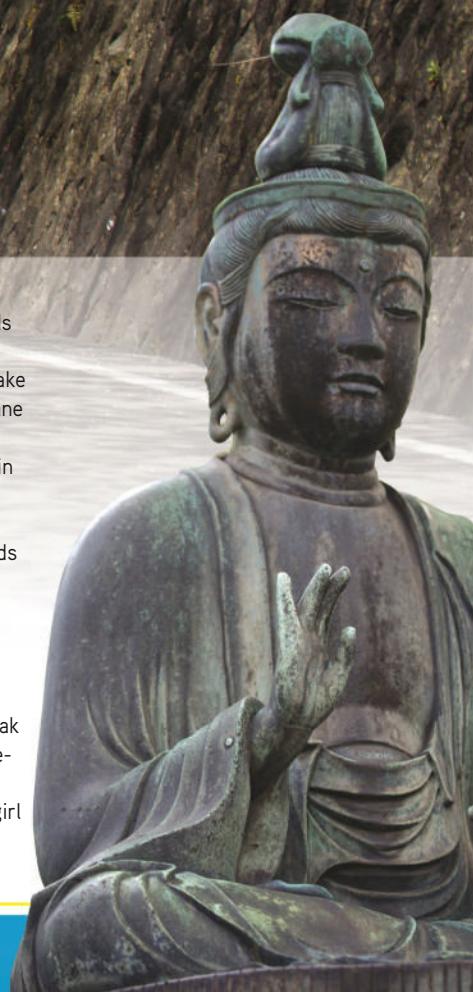
upon Japan's largest *tengu* mask in Haruno and stop for some photos. It's there that I learn more about the local-born father of the Z-car and first president of Nissan Motor Corporation USA, Yutaka Katayama, and his namesake road. Mr. K. lived to the ripe old age of 105 by the way—talk about cheating death in every run over these mountain passes!

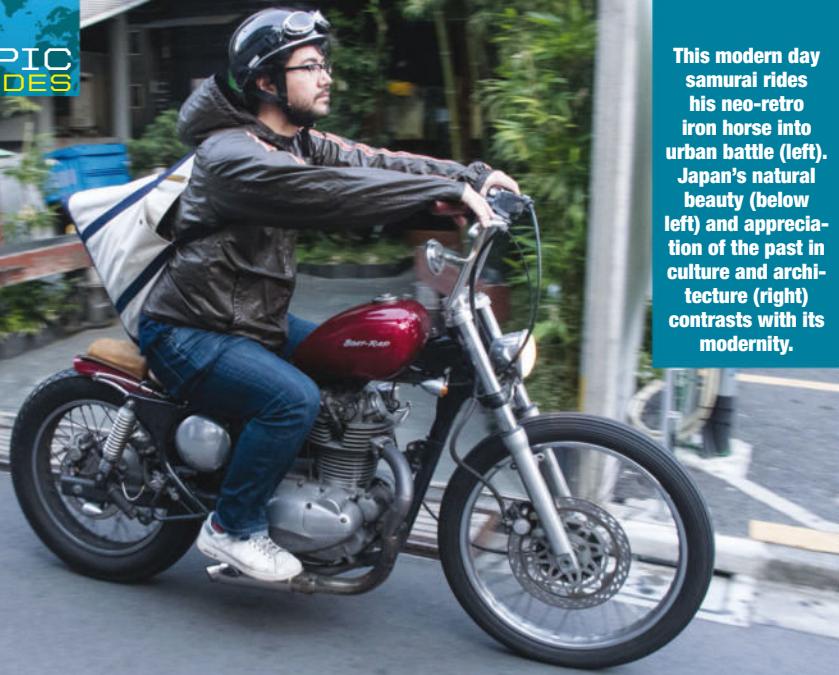
A few kilometers later, there they are, stopped for a snack at a random intersection, this one connecting to Mr. K.'s road. Hurried through long-distance hellos and rider introductions, we're collectively on the throttle again. No problem; we'll talk later. We're here to ride, after all. Four minutes later I've flipped this mass of touring machine from one floorboard to the other about a thousand times. In a flash I've seen more of the rural Japan in one morning than I had in the previous week under the glass-and-steel landscape of Shinagawa and Minato-ku.



If not scenic and beautiful, and possibly toll-laden, they're some of the wildest roads I've ever ridden, winding along rivers and streams, taking 120-degree turns like we take in oxygen. Single-lane roads (and single-lane two-way tunnels!) switch to freshly paved two-lane roads and back again to one within the same 500 meters.

While the pace was brisk, the Harley-Davidson Ultra held on, scraping floorboards and pinging from a poorly selected fuel fill-up. High-test fuel is best for this American machine, but figuring out which pump was which proved somewhat tricky. Like in the state of New Jersey, attendants will pump your gas for you, but they don't always speak English. Muttering "super" in English sometimes worked. "Supreme" worked in other places. In Kanagawa, however, the young girl pumping gas knew neither of those words but quickly whipped out a smartphone and





This modern day samurai rides his neo-retro iron horse into urban battle (left). Japan's natural beauty (below left) and appreciation of the past in culture and architecture (right) contrasts with its modernity.



“Four minutes later I’ve flipped this mass of touring machine from one floorboard to the other about a thousand times—literally.”

Google Translate to aid this obvious tourist. Hiragana to English, “Which type of oil would you like in your bike?” Please no oil in my tank! Packing my own smartphone and app combo, we traded a few phrases and learned she knew “high octane.” Yes, please! And before I throttled off she typed and translated again with a smile, “Harley? Cool!” Oh, the saving grace of technology; give me a data plan and I can go anywhere!

GETTING THERE

While many experience jet-lag problems traveling west, I was lucky not to have experienced the “up all night” problem made popular by Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson in *Lost in Translation*. Hopefully you get ample rest as well, as this is the land from which the fastest production motorcycles on earth derive, and you’ll need it—though I do wonder if anyone actually rides those bikes on Japan’s roadways.

It’s easy to buy a flight to Tokyo’s Narita airport, but how does one get from there to a seaside *ryokan* in a remote part of the country? The Narita Express train will get you into the city in about an hour, for roughly \$30 depending on the exchange rate and the vendor through which you book. Get yourself

a local data SIM card at the airport as well—very helpful! I pre-booked one to meet me at the airport post office, but last-minute deals cost nearly the same. Locally, if you plan to get off the motorcycle and see the city on foot, a prepaid Suica card will get you everywhere on local buses, trains, and subways for a similar pay-per-distance scale seen on the national highways. They can even be used to swipe-pay at 7-Elevens and many electronics stores.

Japan is generally inexpensive to travel around, just not to live in. Land is scarce and expensive, as is transportation, but the common first-world traveler can find Japan quite familiar—if you know what it’s like to dine out in Los Angeles or New York City. Five-dollar lunches and \$15 dinners are easily found, as are cheaper eats (as well as over-the-top ones) if you want them. I was relieved to find how simple it was to roughly make the currency conversion in Japan. At the time of my trip, the current exchange rate allowed for the simple migration of the decimal point two digits to the left. So 5,000 yen simply became (roughly) \$50. That made travel in a land where not one sign in any of their three character sets (kanji, hiragana, or katakana) would look anything like it had a Latin root so much easier to tackle.

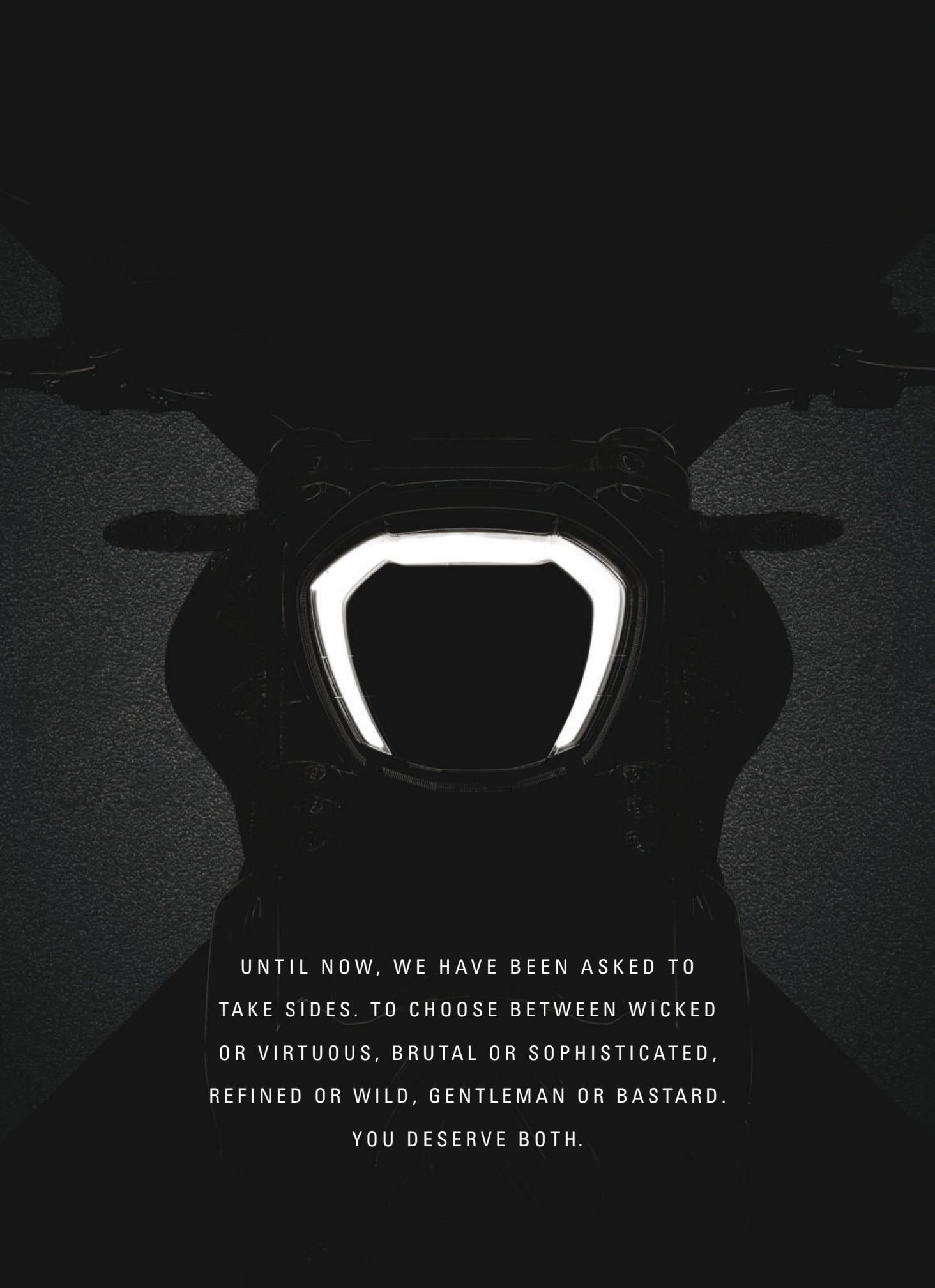
It’s not all raw fish and ramen when it comes to getting a bite to eat. They have Denny’s and McDonald’s and Subway for the meek. But who travels halfway around the world to eat something you can get at home? With a strong language barrier and steep learning curve, learning to bow (the handshake equivalent) at least your head and to say “*arigato gozaimasu*” (thank you very much), will get you everywhere. “*Sumimasen*” (excuse me) helps as well, especially when you need to ask for a check at dinner. Tipping is not accepted, by the way—service is an honored, often lifetime, profession. Score one for the budget traveler or math-challenged rider.

Whatever brings you to Japan, riding a motorcycle there is a must. It’s a little less like paradise in the urban centers of course, but the roads and rules of riding in Japan make for an incredible experience. If you’ve come to work, look beyond the gardens and toward the 5,000 miles of highways and onto their back roads.

SADDLE UP, PARTNER

Most visiting riders rent and ride day trips outside the city to see the resort towns huddled at the foot of Japan’s iconic Mt. Fuji or to see the Giant Buddha in Kamakura, about 30 miles south of Tokyo.

With a brand-new Harley between my legs, often tripling the engine power of passenger cars and delivery trucks on the same road, it’s a scramble to find my way out of the city without a GPS or map taped to my tank. Describing the roads of Tokyo as a bowl of spaghetti (or ramen) makes it sound perhaps smooth and predictable. Instead, they’re smooth and free of the potholes, but they’re far deeper than that bowl of ramen—with overpasses, underpasses, tunnels long enough to make you forget the



UNTIL NOW, WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO
TAKE SIDES. TO CHOOSE BETWEEN WICKED
OR VIRTUOUS, BRUTAL OR SOPHISTICATED,
REFINED OR WILD, GENTLEMAN OR BASTARD.
YOU DESERVE BOTH.



Travelers can easily enjoy a night's stay in a historical ryokan (left) just about everywhere. It's a stark contrast to the modern sardine cans of Tokyo's city-dwellers (above). A single-lane road cuts a corridor through towering conifers, offering scenic toll-free riding.

"If you find yourself riding for more than five or 10 minutes without putting a foot down, you're on a toll road and will be paying for [it] soon enough."

time of day, and tunnels with turns, camber, and elevation changes to boot. Then there are the tolls. If you find yourself riding for more than five or 10 minutes without putting a foot down, you're on a toll road and will be paying for the privilege to ride it soon enough if you haven't already. And you will again.

The center city beltway starts with the usual ante up (a \$9.30 entry fee), upon which you would add a cost for the distance traveled outside that ring road, roughly \$3 per mile for a motorcycle and \$4 per mile in a regular car. The "ETC" above the tollbooth lane means they only take electronic means to collect the toll, i.e. Fastpass and the like. You'll probably want the cash lane. From there, you'll ride like the board game Chutes and Ladders to suburban neighborhoods and other expressways, the latter of course are also toll roads. In a city where even the commuter light rail system is built on pay-per-kilometer, so are the roadways, but they're unlike any I've ever seen. Anyone remember the bright and blinking road furniture of the 1982 roadracing video game *Pole Position* with blinking armco and pointing paint stripes the turns? That's what it's like in Japan today, seriously. If you ride at night, prepare for possible hallucination flashbacks.

The oft-ridden day-escape from the concrete jungle is toward Mt. Fuji, and the toll to ride out there will be about \$35 each way along the Chuo Expressway, for a two-hour journey each way, not counting traffic. Don't even think about taking the surface streets. Save it for the lakeside drives and mountain passes surrounding the area.

One of the 77 active volcanoes on the island, and the tallest, is Fuji-san (last

erupting in 1707) and its surrounding lakeside community, known as Five Lakes, has plenty of attractions both manmade and natural, from ancient footpaths to modern-day amusement parks. If you can find the time, book a night at one of the traditional Japanese hotels, or *ryokans* (think paper walls and frameless futons) for a deeper understanding of Japan. The onsen (or spa) is a way of life for tourists as well as the locals. Public, but gender-divided, baths still exist in many *ryokans* and can be visited as hotel guest or an hourly visitor. Swim trunks are forbidden, and a proper pre-bathing ritual keeps these spaces unique. There's absolutely no better way to rest (and maybe thaw out) after a day's ride than with a soak. Check in, zone out, and then go find dinner. Don't expect high-pressure jets, by the way—that's a foreign invention.

On the expressways, the posted speed limit is typically 80 kph. The "flow" tends to go 100 kph, with motorcyclists riding about 120 to 140 kph depending on their willingness to test the system. Speed cameras are there and easily visible, as are about 9 billion blind corners and nooks for a cop to hide in, yet luck tends to be on the rider's side. Speeding drivers are ticketed in one of two ways: by front-facing cameras intended to capture the front license plates of a driver's car (motorcycles do not have them) and by an approaching follow. So mind your mirrors and twist that grip with a smile. And if they do ever stop you, your language barrier usually dissolves the problem, as they prefer not to allow their pride to be damaged by not being able to process a foreign license and so they'll let you go...if you're lucky!



NEW YORK WITH MANNERS

Cruising past the clichés like the 10-story electronics stores and Sailor Moon outfits and the weird stuff like absinthe bars, robot burlesques, and the ubiquitous heated toilet seats, Japan is an amazing place to visit... especially if you like getting out of your comfort zone with both language and food. (Wasabi-flavored Kit Kat, anyone? How about apple vinegar?) In the end, a road is a road in any language, and you know what to do with those—keep the rubber side down and the experiences on the upside.

On my next visit, I hope to visit stunningly beautiful Kyoto and the Kawasaki Motors plant, maybe get a ride on the J300 scooter. More importantly, I'll pick a warmer month. While April is perfect for Golden Week (a national holiday celebrating the birthday of Emperor Showa) and the annual cherry blossom festivals, it's too close to winter for comfort and downright chilly. If not outright snowing! Nevertheless, it's well worth the physical discomfort to view this gorgeous country—and meet its overwhelmingly kind and helpful inhabitants—from the best mode of transport there is. A motorcycle.



Check out the satellite-tracked Rever map for this epic ride (and the others) at motorcyclistonline.com/epicrides.



the gentleman ~~the~~ the bastard



XDIABEL

xdiavel.ducati.com

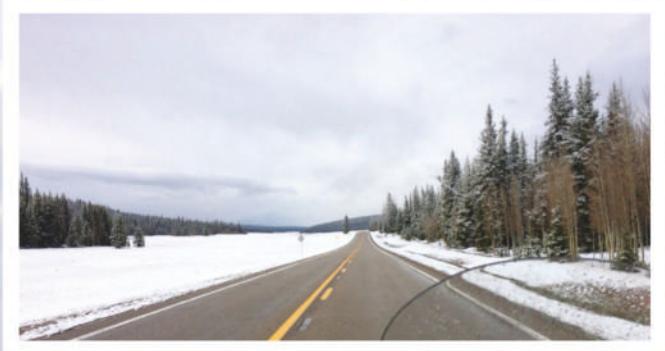


MASTER OF ROADS

WORDS: Zack Courts / PHOTOS: Zack Courts & Kat Stolpa

An Indian Takes on the Wild West





Navigation, my father always says, that is what separates us from the apes. I absorbed that lesson constantly when learning to ride. That is, every time I pulled up to an intersection and asked him which way to go, I would get a cool smile and the rhetorical, "They teach monkeys to ride the things, y'know." Shifting, using turn signals, and not tipping over are all things that help us get there. But you have to know where you're going first.

I thought about that as I stared at the roof of my tent in the middle of the night, wearing most of my clothes, unable to sleep. I rolled over and looked at my girlfriend, wool hat covering her eyes, and breathing steam out through a coaster-size hole in the hood of her sleeping bag. Focusing on a serious bout of shivering meant I could feel warm enough to drift off for a few minutes, but the cold would soon wake me up. I drifted in and out of this psychedelic state most of the night, having those perplexing, dramatic dreams that leave one questioning their sanity in the morning. *Don't steer the tanker into Hong Kong Harbor, Grandma! Listen to captain. Who cares if he's a mule deer!* She didn't listen.

Then again, those dreams aren't always less crazy than the dreams we have when we're awake. If you're a wheelhead you're probably up to your eyeballs in fantasies, whether it's driving the French Riviera in a vintage Ferrari or stumbling through the Himalayas on a Royal Enfield. We've all got them, some more realistic than others, and having an opportunity to check one off the list is always too good to pass up.

For me, maybe because I watched one too many Wile E. Coyote-versus-Road Runner cartoons, the American Southwest has always held a certain inscrutability in my mind. Similarly, so does the American V-twin. I grew up far away from both. And so the concept of riding to any of our country's great treasures aboard another one is an idea I've never been able to shake. Which is how I ended up freezing my lovely partner within a few degrees of pneumonia on the lip of one of the Seven Wonders of the World.



"It was the subject of much praise from mostly mustachioed travelers of a certain, maroon-and-cream vintage. I didn't know Indian still made bikes!"

"Hey, what if we ride to the Grand Canyon over Memorial Day?" I said. "That sounds awesome!" she said. I basked in the glow of my brilliant idea; a road trip on a federal remembrance holiday to a national park on Indian's Roadmaster with all the free, fresh air she could breathe. What a lucky girl. Of course, I'm merely a child inside with man-size ideas and resources, which became more evident the closer we came to shoving off on the utopian, all-American vacation. I didn't let on. I had fooled her into thinking I'm a fully functioning adult male for this long—might as well keep the charade going.

Sun sinking into the ocean and bike stacked high with camping stuffs, I pointed the land barge we had created east for Zion National Park. Being stuck in traffic, then construction, then more traffic had me concerned that what felt like 1,500 pounds of motorcycle was too much, but eventually

we broke free of greater (and lesser) Los Angeles. On I-15 headed toward Las Vegas, the Roadmaster finally hit its stride. Once in sixth gear and with the cruise control set to "gentle canter," I had a chance to fiddle with some of the other do-dads.

I played with the power windshield until I found a good height then played with it some more just to irritate my passenger—er, I mean, pass the time. I reveled in the seat for a while, a little slippery but business-class wide and comfy. With a fully padded back pad and armrests on the poop deck, she was happy too. Manual wind-protection flaps adorn the fairing lowers, multiple on each side, which accounted for lots of entertainment. Once all of the different combinations had been tried we were tired and put down for the night on the eastern edge of California. First thing in the morning we had been welcomed to Nevada and the stench

of sin was tickling our nostrils. Happily, I glided through Vegas without slowing down because with a tent and my lady on the back why would I want my luck to change?

Clipping the edge of Arizona, the landscape began to change as we hit Utah and peeled off on state Route 9. Excited to set the mood, I remembered that less-than-freeway speeds meant I could experiment with the Roadmaster's stereo. I found mostly Christian-rock stations but also a new color of red that the gal-friend's cheeks turn when she's embarrassed at a gas station. Once through the gates of Zion, though, the sights muted everything and I shut the radio off. Captivated by the splendor of the scenery, our "quick hike" turned into a three-hour scramble to the top of Angel's Landing—easily one of the more frightening and stunningly beautiful places I have ever been.

Back aboard the barge we gaped and laughed in amazement at the alien beauty of Zion's red roads and implausible tunnels. The Roadmaster chugged through the park perfectly balanced, feeling a thousand pounds lighter than reality (1,345 pounds we learned later—yes, really) and only touching



The stroll to the top of Angel's Landing (above) is more business than casual, but the views of Zion are worth it. Snow on a motorcycle trip (above right) often pairs with sarcastic thumbs up. Finally, a motel that matches the Roadmaster's vintage chic (right). Zion's red roads (opposite) and martian land.

floorboards when I got too frisky in a hairpin. It all felt like a ride at an amusement park, and we would have gone back for another pass had we not already enjoyed the sights so much already. Also, as the Chief Logistics Coordinator on the pillion reminded me, the sun was dipping and we had more than 100 miles to our campsite.

The sun set as the road number dropped from 89 to 67, the home stretch to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Temperatures, however, continued downward well beyond 67, and nobody had a closer eye on the Roadmaster's thermometer than the CLC. Below 45 degrees she announced over the headset each degree lost—it became less a temperature gauge and more a digital readout of how unpleasant camping would be once we arrived.

Unfortunately, in our most testing hour, we also had the most imminent and unpredictable distraction: hundreds of deer. With temps in the high 30s and only the faintest glow of daylight on the horizon we wanted to be there already, but every quarter-mile or so there stood a pack of three to 15 incredibly agile and confused creatures grazing on the roadside. And so the 55-mpg speed limit was more realistically 40 mph to keep from losing a tense game of "Deer Dodge."

We set up camp and chattered our teeth through the night, certain to be met in the morning with sunshine and the magnificence of Il Canyon Grande. Instead there was hail,



sleet, and eventually rain that tapped on the tent all morning, supervising our breakfast and packing. After lunch and a hot cocoa at The Lodge to boost morale, we figured there was an obligation to look at the huge hole in the ground, being that it was the impetus for the ride. The low clouds finally seemed weary of spitting but stayed hovering over the canyon, plumes of fog tumbling dramatically around the spires of red rock that seemed to radiate light. Even on a dreary, cold day, wearing clammy clothes and sleep-deprived eyes, it was hard to come up with a more complete title than "grand."

We blamed most of our suffering through the cold on our own neglect for remembering that the North Rim of the Grand Canyon sits at around 8,000 feet of elevation, and with that we saddled up and thundered around the eastern edge of the park. Being in my business-class leather seat with heated

grips, I was happy. "I wish this thing had a heated seat," was the comment from astern. Clearly not as happy. [We are obligated to say that the Roadmaster did have heated seats. Good luck explaining that, Zack. —Ed.] Still, we were warmer with every foot descended, and I reminded her that even though the sun was going down we were getting a mile closer to the equator every minute. It would be practically tropical in Flagstaff!

Tropical no, but the next day was splashed pleasantly with Copper State sunshine, which buoyed our spirits. We hiked Cathedral Rock in Sedona and lunched in the funky mountain town of Jerome, before connecting back to Route 89 and cruising through Prescott National Forest and down into the desert of western Arizona. We camped in the town of Salome, best described as non-descript, and ultimately found the sanctum in camping that had been the target. A jagged ridgeline

“Motorcycles can bring you to amazing places. You have to point them in the right direction at the right time—that’s the trick.”



dozens of miles off made a saw-tooth sunset silhouette, and we finally slept soundly, bellies full of camp-stove soup.

The final few hundred miles back toward Hell-A were largely uninteresting—a snack of peanut butter and bread in a truck stop and a lovely trip west on the Pines-to-Palms Highway being the highlights—but did offer steady miles to reflect. For one, I vastly underestimated our national parks. It's easy to lust after journeys to exotic, foreign lands, but this jaunt illustrated vividly that there's plenty to be seen in the land between the shining seas.

And what of the Roadmaster, lumbering land barge of the Wild West? Its 111ci never missed a beat, while the stereo entertained and the dash displayed everything from temperature to tire pressure. Quite a machine, I have to say. It was also the subject of much praise from mostly mustachioed travelers of a certain, maroon-and-cream vintage. “I didn't know Indian still made bikes!” Does it ever, and with heated seats, apparently.

To experience the majesty of just a corner of our nation was, in itself, worth the effort of a long weekend, and adding the whimsy of not being a real adult (yet) made it fun. But as a chronic gearhead and dreamer, to visit such a deep nerve center of our society's heritage aboard the modern example of a storied brand was a special box to check. The fatigue, sleet storm, and numb fingertips served us well in the end too, by brushing up on an old lesson. Motorcycles can bring you to amazing places. You have to point them in the right direction at the right time—that's the trick.

A hike to the base of Cathedral Rock (above) dishes out awesome views of Sedona scenery. Cruise control (right) allows for enthusiasm to be passed smoothly from rider to passenger. Soaking in a sunset (below) in southern Utah.



Check out the satellite-tracked Rever map for this epic ride (and the others) at motorcyclistonline.com/epicrides.





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ADV GENESIS

11 Readers on Eight Bikes from Three Countries, in Search of the ADV Grail

WORDS: Zack Courts / PHOTOS: Spenser Robert, Zack Courts, Kat Stolpa, Shawn Sokell

The scenes of coastal Croatia via route E65.

To get a feel for any bike, ideally you want a wide variety of roads. If most gearheads had their way it would be a combination of favorite forest roads, sweeping coastal curves, and maybe a sprinkling of the famous Alps for good measure. Edelweiss—a decades-old motorcycle tour company—agreed with this principle and so set us up on a journey. We would take four of the most hotly contested ADV machines on the market along a seven-day voyage through three European countries in the hands of a tour company that truly knows what it's doing.

Between BMW's scintillating new S1000XR, the legendary R1200GS, Ducati's new-for-2015 Multistrada 1200, and KTM's 1290 Super Adventure, the MC staff has logged many miles. So, as a filter from hearing the same opinions from the same editors (and for fun), 11 readers from all around the world joined us on an epic road trip. The goal? To find out if a week of riding through Austria, Croatia, and Slovenia was the recipe for finding the roads—and maybe

the bike—from which dreams are made.

The ride would be Salzburg to Salzburg—not terribly interesting if you take the shortest point to point, but a scenic route to the Adriatic and back was on the docket. And, in the ultimate case of hit-the-ground-running, within 100 miles of Salzburg we tackled the Grossglockner High Alpine Road, the highest paved pass in Austria and home of the 24-euro toll. It would also prove to be one of the highlights of the trip, even a week later. The ribbons of tarmac trickling around and down from the Grossglockner glacier soak in epic views and offer stupendous (if not a little crowded) riding, which, let's be honest, for 30 bucks it really should.

The KTM's 1,301cc velvet hammer powerplant was quickly a favorite for those straddling the Super Adventure, while S1000 riders admitted to giggling in their helmets every time the XR howled through the gearbox via quickshifter. Even though most of the riders would happily have bounced along the ridges and slung themselves

through the curves of Grossglockner until they ran out of fuel, we scurried south to the town of Klagenfurt for the night.

A cruise up Loibl Pass and through the mile-long tunnel out of Austria (in the words of one reader, "I'd never ridden a bike through a mountain before, so just that in itself was GoPro worthy!") began the 130-mile trek across western Slovenia. The narrow river valleys in the Zelznički region south of Lake Bled served up beautifully flowing roads throughout the middle of the day. Quaint towns clinging to coniferous hillsides, sprinkled with prolific gardens and stately little churches, had a Tolkien-esque mystique and seemed to hush the engines as we passed by. Ultra-tight sections of road meant Multistrada riders were smiling, noting that the bike felt compact and always willing to dive toward an apex. We crossed into Croatia late in the afternoon with a casual border stop and passport stamp, only a few miles down the freeway to the seaside resort town of Opatija (pronounced opat-ya).



Shawn Sokell // Toronto, Canada

BIKE AT HOME: 1190 Adventure

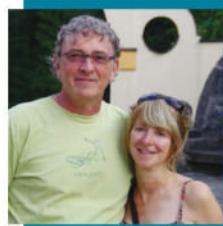
FAVORITE BIKE ON TOUR: "For me, with the amount of straight-on, boring highway riding I have to do, I'd have to pick the KTM. It's just better at that. But in the corners, nothing gives me the confidence that the XR gives me."

ON RIDING IN EUROPE: "I've often dreamt of riding the Alps and the roads of Europe, with all of the corners and mountain passes—this has been a dream come true for me. The downside is, riding at home is going to be sad!"



Opatija's taste is wholly Mediterranean, but the typical mix of old-world flavor and modern tourism is flavored heavily with the patina of prewar Yugoslavian rule. After a "rest day" by the water—some stayed and basked in the perfect beach weather or explored beyond the city limits, while others rode west across the Istrian peninsula for lunch and a photo stop near the Limski Fjord—the group headed south along the Croatian coast for the islands of Croatia. Krk and Rab proved tricky to pronounce, but what they lack in vowels they make up for in scenery, which we soaked up via short jaunts across the isles as well as two ferry rides, eventually settling for lunch in the town of Rab. Freshly caught and seared bluefin tuna flavored the cinematic beauty of the harbor; pastel buildings decorated the hillsides, and the vintage speedboats gurgling through the marina would have made any *Bond* villain proud.

Reconnecting to the mainland around 55 miles south of the first bridge, we followed the coast north for 20 miles until finally



Dan Quick and Barb Amato // Lakeshore Township, Ontario, Canada

BIKE AT HOME: R1200GS Adventure

DAN'S FAVORITE BIKE ON TOUR: "I guess my favorite bike would probably be the GS. I hate to say it, maybe it's almost cliché, but it does everything so well. It handles great, the water-cooled engine revs up so quick, and has great power."

DAN'S LEAST FAVORITE ON TOUR: "I had high hopes for the S1000XR, and I was kind of disappointed. At the end of a day on the XR my hands were numb. It's definitely buzzy."

BARB ON RIDING IN EUROPE: "I wish we had more time! The roads, the cities, everything was so beautiful."



THE LATEST AND GREATEST

Cutting-edge ADVs from BMW, Ducati, and KTM carried us through Europe. Everyone loved the Ducati's dash, the KTM's engine, and the S1000XR's quickshifter. Very few readers mentioned the R1200GS as their favorite or least favorite, but were also unable to find many flaws. Maybe that's why there are always so many GSs in the Alps?



BMW S1000XR



BMW R1200GS



DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1200S



KTM 1290 SUPER ADVENTURE

turning away from the water, nearly two days after we first spotted the sea. The road climbed away from the water brilliantly, switching back countless times and presenting a bird's eye perspective of the triangular islands bathing in the shimmering Adriatic. Cresting the hills and losing sight of the sea changed the environment dramatically. Arid, rocky hillsides soon turned back into lush forest, and within minutes we were slowing to pass through old-fashioned farm towns straight from a New England postcard.

By then, about halfway through the trip, full rotations on the bikes were complete and riders were picking at the finer points of the machines. The KTM's stiff seat was a common complaint, as well as exhaust heat from the Ducati and buzzy bars on the S1000XR. We settled in the town of Otočac, plunked squarely in middle-of-nowhere Croatia. But even being somewhere so

foreign, the humanity was prominent: a farmer bouncing into town on a tractor, a low-key soccer game under public lights, and a train of cars honking through town to celebrate a wedding.

We left Otočac cloaked in dense and chilly fog, a welcome change from the sticky heat we had been riding in for days and finally a chance to use the heated grips. Soon we were circling wetlands and starting to notice signs for Plitvička Jezera Park, promising

waterfalls and, as far as we could tell, a snack bar. The snacks were mediocre, as it turned out, which is a lot less than should be said for the park. It's not easy to describe how a few waterfalls can be truly magnificent, but Plitvice is otherworldly. Lakes that have been gathering for millennia spill over into each other, creating everything from low, tumbling staircases to massive cascades, all surrounded by turquoise pools and immense networks of tree roots. It's the



who doesn't like 40 extra horsepower?"

Bruce and Dawn Smith // Minneapolis, Minnesota

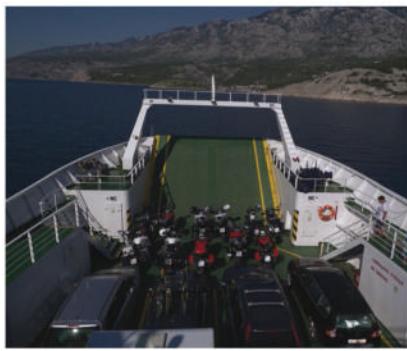
BIKES AT HOME: Super Ténérés, Burgman 650, Kymco scooters

DAWN'S FAVORITE BIKE ON TOUR: "My favorite bike was definitely the GS. It's very responsive, light, and easy for me to touch the ground at 5-foot-4. I liked the gearing, and I felt right at home riding it."

BRUCE'S FAVORITE BIKE ON TOUR: "If I had to buy one, being 54 years old the bike I should buy would be the GS, but I don't know. I think it might be that Super Adventure. That thing has gobs of power, and

DAWN ON RIDING IN EUROPE: "It was the trip of a lifetime. The different cultures, the different foods, the scenery—it's very difficult to describe. It was just beautiful."

The massive bridge connecting mainland Croatia to the Island of Krk (opposite). Croatian road signs were plentiful (right) but mostly we were glad to have Edelweiss guides to keep us on track. The 80-minute ferry ride from Krk to Rab (below) gave us time to sightsee off two wheels and for our drone to chase the boat. Luckily, security seemed laid back.



closest to the *Avatar* set you'll ever get and well worth the \$30 fee.

It was an enjoyable break from time in the saddle, to stroll around the falls and soak up the cool mist. Back roads and calm towns were the theme of the afternoon, with an Eastern Block bent—severe austerity seems a recent memory in this part of the world. To the furthest extent, military tension was evident, in a nearly whole Soviet-era fighter jet overgrown on someone's front lawn. What with the rural and slightly impoverished atmosphere of the Slovenian countryside, nobody expected the capital city of Ljubljana to be such a sparkling gem. But it is. All of the charm and history of the Balkan states seems to be wrapped up and presented in a thoroughly vibrant, clean, and metropolitan city.

Being one of the larger metro areas we encountered, it also brought out more personality in the bikes. Ducati's brilliant, full-color dash wowed everyone by transitioning from night mode and back in tunnels. Then again few were happy with the Multi's fueling at low speeds, unless the ride mode was changed constantly. And the mighty R1200GS that we haven't mentioned at all? Let's just say the only thing that made everyone quieter than the local food was asking for a list of



Yoram Arnon // Palo Alto, California

BIKES AT HOME: V-Strom 650, 1290 Super Adventure

FAVORITE BIKE ON TOUR: "I own a KTM Super Adventure, so I came off with that being my favorite, but these bikes are all good in their own way. [For example], getting on the S1000XR is like putting on an old glove—it just does whatever you want without you even thinking about it."

ON RIDING IN EUROPE: "The Alps are...something else. You look around and there are wonderful peaks everywhere. Riding on these wonderful, smooth, sometimes-narrow roads, beautiful scenery for miles and miles, with a very capable group of riders—it doesn't get much better than that."

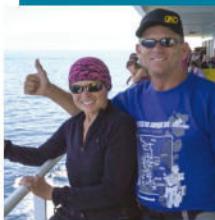
"Krk and Rab proved tricky to pronounce, but what they lack in vowels they make up for in scenery..."





“My advice to my friends would be: Get a second mortgage if you have to, and make this s—t happen. You won’t regret it.”

—Shawn Sokell



Kirk and Sherrie Young // Redding, California

BIKES AT HOME: Multistrada 1200, KLR 650

KIRK'S FAVORITE BIKE ON TOUR: “My favorite bike was the KTM 1290. It felt smaller than I expected. Gobs of torque and power and just really easy to ride. If I was going to buy one, which I might because I’m in the market, that KTM might be it.”

KIRK'S LEAST FAVORITE ON TOUR: “Believe it or not, the Multistrada, even though there's one in my garage. It doesn't seem as refined; it doesn't shift as easily. It's not a bad bike. It's just not as good as the other three.”

SHERRIE ON RIDING IN EUROPE: “Opatija reminded us of South Africa [Camps Bay]; the houses on the hill and the beaches—we came around the corner and saw it and thought, wow.”



problems with the Gelände-Strasse. It set everyone up for a final two days of sampling each bike one last time and some of the best riding of all.

We meandered reluctantly out of Ljubljana, to north and the promise of twisty alpine roads. On the hem of the Alps in northern Slovenia the scenery became more severe, but also lush and green, with jagged peaks in the distance. Surrounding the border of Slovenia and Austria is alpine nirvana, with every type of switchback and curve imaginable laid into a stellar landscape via ultra-smooth pavement. Just less than 200 miles later we reached the picturesque town of Saint Gallen where a stunning, 135-year-old hunting castle was our home for the final night on the road, nestled into the eastern tip of the Alps and squarely in the middle of Austria.

Superb riding continued on the final day, with a 150-mile route from the castle back to Salzburg, via crooked and entertaining alpine valleys. A stop in on the impossibly charming lakeside town of Hallstatt got us rested and ready to climb over the ultra-scenic Postalm panoramic road, cutting across hillsides and through thick forest—eventually right through a ski area—before dropping us amongst the lakes east of Salzburg. Less than an

hour after arriving at our Salzburg hotel, and following a full week of hot, beautiful weather, the skies opened. Torrential rain through that evening and into the morning of our departure from Austria was enough of a sign that the trip was a success.

It also gave time to reflect on an interesting theme among the machines. Riding German, Italian, and Austrian adventure motorcycles through the Alps and along the Adriatic coast, it's easy to see how the inspiration for the big ADV trend was born. These bikes are the most versatile and capable mutants in the motorcycling world, clearly evolved from some of the most diverse, challenging, and epic roads on the planet.



Tim Lambert and Donna Stumpf // Albuquerque, New Mexico

BIKES AT HOME: V-Strom 650, Aprilia Futura

TIM'S FAVORITE BIKE ON TOUR: “Without a doubt it's the S1000XR. It might not be your classic adventure bike, if you're going to go off road, but as far as sport touring it just dominates. It's a fantastic, amazing bike.”

TIM'S LEAST FAVORITE ON TOUR: “Probably the Ducati. Between the heat under the seat from the exhaust and the false neutral between every gear, it was clearly the worst bike in my opinion.”

DONNA ON RIDING IN EUROPE: “Austria... The whole country is just so pristine and exquisite. Everything is perfectly manicured—it's straight out of a postcard. From the back-seat perspective, you're completely intoxicated with your eyes every minute of every day.”

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WHAT THEY DID HERE

There is a place called departure, otherwise known as Port Jervis. It is magnetic to my motorcycle, this doorway at the corner of three states. Until I go through my trip has not begun; I've just had the throttle on for 60 miles. Then my wheels tremble for a few long minutes on its open-grade bridge over the Delaware. When they stop I know I am underway.

Port Jervis sends me now toward both pleasure and pain. I am headed to the white-hot center of America's greatest cataclysm, the battlefields of a vast conflict that imperiled everything we were or could become. The Civil War may be our most studied war—tens

of thousands of books and counting—but no amount of page turning can equal the knock-down force of standing on the very earth that was watered by the blood of 600,000 men.

And pleasure? Well, every bike trip holds joy, even during those inevitable passages that must wait to reveal it. (Three hundred miles of cold rain I can do. Stiff wind I can do, though my heart may catch in my throat when the bike is suddenly pushed by invisible hands. Heavy fog I can do, grateful for auxiliary lights. Traffic that continually cycles between 70 mph and 10—ahead, a pickup rear-ends a semi during rubbernecking of an identical accident across the median—I

can do, even if I wince. All four while the filler plug pukes an alarming amount of oil onto my left leg? Apparently, I can do that too. A week later, it's a good story.)

It is pleasure, too, because satisfying any abiding fascination, even with the most terrible events, is euphoria. And the Civil War had abided in me a long time. It's odd to "love" a war, yet I had been what you might call romantically attached since youth. My father had taken me to Gettysburg where I thrilled to the 1884 Cyclorama, and to the fields and orchards my imagination easily overpainted with the frenetic fighting I'd seen in *Civil War Times Illustrated*.



Riding Through Civil War Times

WORDS & PHOTOS: Melissa Holbrook Pierson

Now I would go far deeper. And, through three states, still not far enough: Cross the Mason-Dixon line and you are in territory where every other mile apparently saw some ferocious struggle, saw lines that entrenched then fell back, byways down which endless columns of weary men marched. Battles were fought and a month or a year later another conflict would erupt on the same spot, original sacrifice erased. Troops ordered to a new front discovered their path lay over previously contested ground—but only by coming upon their comrades' rotting bodies, still unburied. Down each road markers and monuments



The view from Harpers Ferry (far left); Stonewall Jackson at First Manassas (left); Joe explains the scene at Five Forks (above); living history at Fredericksburg; Brawner's Farm (below).



and red-white-and-blue Civil War Trails signs stood thick. Every inch of this land seemed a witness. It was to make me one too.

All I had to do was populate these fields in my imagination. Not hard. The Civil War was the first armed conflict widely photographed. The pictures, once seen, cannot be unseen. They take up permanent residence in the mind, eyes of the long dead forever on yours.

I wanted an unmediated view onto where they clashed, sense the weather, the feel of the air, as they might have. I wanted intimate communion. I wanted to ride there.

I stage out of Hagerstown, Maryland,

where in the gathering dusk I roll slowly past the same houses that once looked out on fighting in its streets. Confederate sympathizers here helped Lee's forces on his retreat from Gettysburg; six days later there was skirmishing when Federals under Custer succeeded in taking the town. Then I arrive at the Comfort Inn and the spell is broken. My own retreat is to the bed, in a sea of battlefield maps and a volume from Bruce Catton's trilogy on the Union.

My aim is to visit both beginning and end. So to Harpers Ferry, site of John Brown's ill-fated 1859 raid on the federal arsenal





Blinded by fog and smoke and head-high corn, men fought desperately and died in unimaginable profusion at Antietam on September 17, 1862.

“No amount of page-turning can equal the force of standing on earth watered with the blood of 600,000 men.”

that helped precipitate war less than two years later, and to Appomattox, where Lee surrendered to Grant one April day in 1865 both jubilant and sorrowful. In between I would venture to places, all now quiet, where fusillades and screaming artillery fire had torn the air. It was not so long ago.

A more dramatically beautiful (and now utterly peaceful) spot than Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, would be hard to find. Rock climbers favor the cliffs just across the Potomac River, and the Appalachian Trail winds along it before entering the old town on a footbridge and disappearing up well-worn stone steps to the heights above. National Historical Park visitors and hikers, motorcyclists, and bed-and-breakfasters cruise the hilly streets of what had been an industrial center since George Washington located a national armory at the confluence of the Shenandoah and the Potomac. In 1862, on the Bolivar Heights above the musket factories, warehouses, and John Brown's fort, Confederate general Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson would seize a brilliant victory in capturing 12,000 green US troops. (“Remember Harpers Ferry!” would rally them next time.) The town would change hands 14 times during the war.

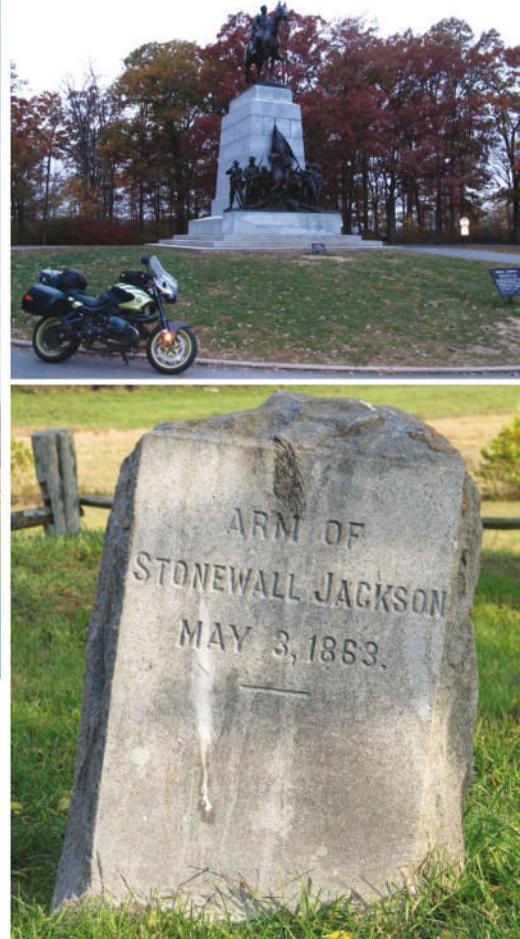
From this scenic spot I ride an hour south through pastel farmscape to Manassas, Virginia, the site of the war's first major battle—the unknowing recruit's baptism by fire. It was horrendous.

This is where Stonewall Jackson

received the moniker that titled his fearless legend; its end would come two years and 50 miles away. The Confederates outgunned the Federals near this strategic supply route in 1861, and a year later at Second Manassas (also known as Bull Run) pushed them back again. As day draws to an end, I ride the few miles to Brawner's Farm, scorching center of carnage in 1862—3,300 dead—and walk alone up the hill to stand in the still twilight that seems also rife with the sound of thousands. Night is coming on, as it was when Jackson's infantry ambushed the unsuspecting Iron Brigade.

So many gains by way of loss, always loss. Only death prevailed: At Monocacy, Maryland, “the battle that saved Washington,” the price was 1,300 Union casualties and defeat. The “winning” forces under Jubal Early left 900 behind. After three days of war, punctuated by cleansing rides through pastoral countryside drenched in late fall sun in order to get to more war, an accumulating weight of sadness, almost desperation, is on me.

A few miles away in Frederick, I park in the city's historic center through which opposing armies passed many times (fighting when they did so at the same time); the only known photograph showing Confederate troops marching under arms was taken here. A bicyclist just dismounting sees my gear and asks if I know the local Harley shop. I think this is just a conversational gambit—and, besides, I have no idea—so I ask in return where I can get the best coffee. He



feels certain I will love a café several blocks away. Turns out he is right. After refreshment in the modern world, I return to the past in the form of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, which is reassuring on many counts—especially the matter of amputations. Most patients in fact received anesthesia and never had to “bite the bullet.”

Yet I find myself growing apprehensive again: The next day is Antietam. Alexander Gardner's photos of human wreckage there, the bloodiest single day in American military history, still and forever shock.

Night had fallen, and I was still far from my hotel; I forgot the GPS was set to avoid the slab. When it directed me off the state road onto a road called Gapland, toward a mountain ridge I could just make out against the purpled sky, the only thing to do was embrace adventure: Let's see where this goes.

Where it went was up, and around, and up some more. The kind of road that in daylight would give a happy smile to the motorcyclist. In the dark it gave her ghosts.

Up ahead on the right, shapes, eerily inexplicable. Until the mind reshapes them—aha. Some of the large explanatory tablets placed by the War Department. In my haunted frame of mind they were sentinels, standing mute where men fell.

Another battle! Even on this chance road. As I crest the ridge my lights illuminate



Robert E. Lee surveys Gettysburg (above left); a curious grave at Ellwood Manor near Chancellorsville (left); and the War Correspondents Memorial Arch (above); stone sentinels at Gettysburg (above right); a succinct memorial at Antietam (right); Graffiti House at Brandy Station, Virginia (far right).

a grand structure, 50 feet high, before it too recedes into the dark woods. A castle?

The next morning, I ride Gapland again. The castle gate becomes the War Correspondents Arch, 1896, our only memorial to journalists killed in the field. It is sited at one of those fields: South Mountain, three gaps hotly contested days before Antietam's hell broke loose.

That battlefield is sobering, the monuments heartbreaking, and the tersest the most so. Three stacked rifles and a cookpot:

Here fought the 90th Penna. (Phila.)

Sept. 17, 1862

A Hot Place

Because it doesn't try to capture the Cornfield's three hours of savagery—"Simultaneously, the hostile battle lines opened a tremendous fire upon each other. Men, I can not say fell; they were knocked out of the ranks by dozens"—it therefore does. I walk alone through a quiet West Woods, once a scene of annihilation: 2,200 Union soldiers. In 20 minutes.

Just as I couldn't take this trip in a cage, I had to take it alone. I could decide how long to sit on some secluded corner of a battlefield, U-turn to read wayside markers, or change plans after the nightly discussion with maps and brochures. But when you have a friend in Richmond, heart of the Confederacy, who not only grew up steeped in the war but is a former re-enactor *and* a motorcyclist, it would be foolish to remain solitary. Joe Sokohl would be my guide for two days to the



sites (and great roads) he knew so intimately: Fredericksburg, Five Forks, the Namozine Church, Chancellorsville—Joe showed me the precise spot where Stonewall Jackson was hit by friendly fire, as well as the nearby grave of the Southern hero's amputated arm. We rode down Richmond's Monument Avenue and to the recently excavated Lumpkin's slave jail, in one unassuming old building the cause of a nation's bloody rupture, practically in the shadow of the Confederacy's capital.

Heading north again, I pass Brandy Station, where Lee ordered a diversionary cavalry attack to hide his northern aspirations. He was on his way to destiny in a place called Gettysburg. I follow Route 15, in part the path of federal forces set to collide with Lee's over three hot days in July 1863. Here we see the struggle in its most epic iteration. Everything that could be experienced in war happened at Gettysburg: bravery beyond comprehension; suffering; decisiveness and indecisiveness; tragedy on top of tragedy. There was no more to give, and then they gave more.

A few years ago I came here, also by motorcycle, the first time since I was a girl. I dismounted at the Virginia monument overlooking the expanse where Pickett's division advanced into federal fire at staggering loss, and in the shadow cast by an enormous bronze Lee on *Traveler*, I sat down and wept. As if I might never stop. It is not an uncommon

effect here. Something slams into you.

That day had been fiendishly hot, too, an aid to the imagination. The Union 6th Corps marched an unthinkable 38 miles from Maryland through the sweltering night of July 1, right into the fight.

The Cyclorama was restored and opened again to the public in 2008. A few minutes of darkness, light, color and sound, and the battle of July 3, the one from which the Confederacy could never fully recover, leaves you shaken. It was painted at a time when veterans of the battle were still very much alive. To view it now is to cross a bridge—over time itself.

I gear up under the hotel's awning then dash through the rain to the bike. As I ride north I hear again the ranger at Gettysburg, so impassioned about history's intricate patterns. "Why do I love history? It's the closest I can get to time travel. That makes me feel like a kid again."

I know what he means. I have a time machine too.

Port Jervis comes into view ahead. I go over the bridge once more. A familiar bridge waits, one I last crossed eight days and 150 years ago.



Check out the satellite-tracked Rever map for this epic ride (and the others) at motorcyclistonline.com/epicrides.

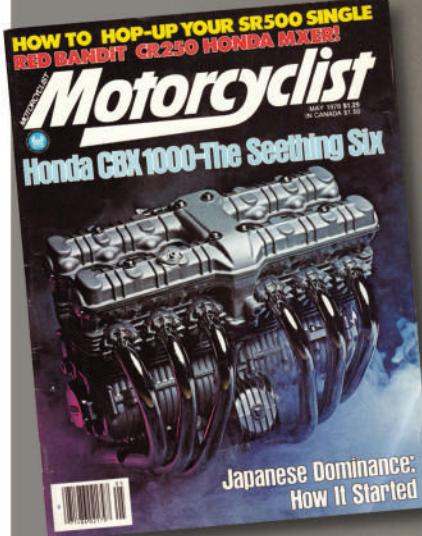
ROOTS



THE STATEMENT

In the Mid-'70s, Honda Needed to Reassert Its Engineering Dominance and Kickstart Motorcycling Passion. The CBX Did Both.

WORDS: Mitch Boehm / **PHOTOS:** Drew Ruiz, *Motorcyclist* archive, Ian Foster



THROWBACK

We were split on the CBX when it debuted, as was the public. But the impact it had on Honda's technology and reputation boosted Big Red into the 1980s with rocket-like thrust.

As intense and successful as the early 1970s were for the Japanese motorcycle manufacturers, and as powerful as Honda became during that period, it's a bit strange to say that a third of Honda's lineup had become stodgy and reasonably uncompetitive by 1975. After massive successes like the astounding CB750, the Elsinore dirt bikes, and the innovative three-wheeled ATC, Japan's engineering powerhouse seemed to have lost the plot.

Few thought it could. But Honda had. By that point, Kawasaki's stunning 903cc Z1 had made a non-issue out of the CB750—a bike Honda had done nearly nothing to in the six years since its introduction. Yamaha sold its giant-killer RD350 like there was no tomorrow, and by '76 there'd be an even better RD400. The bicentennial would also bring the GS750, a motorcycle that would make folks forget about Honda's SOHC 750.

Honda introduced the GL1000 in '75, of course. But its automotive-esque design—an indicator of Honda's push toward what would be a world-class automotive manufacturer—shouted "tourer" a lot more loudly than "performance," so it barely nudged the excitement meter. At the time, many felt that motorcycle division needed a serious shot of adrenaline, a flagship machine that would make people take a deep breath and say, "Whoa!" Fortunately, the men in the big office—Soichiro Honda and division president Tadashi Kume—knew the score and knew who to tap



to make it happen: Shoichiro Irimajiri, Honda's head of R&D.

Iri, as he was known, was already a bit of a legend at Honda. After graduating from Tokyo University in 1963 with a degree in aeronautical engineering, he joined Honda after finding no work in the aviation business. "Honda was my second choice," Iri said later with a smile. Almost immediately, he began developing Honda's Grand Prix racers and, understanding that more cylinders were the only way four-strokes could compete with lightweight two-strokes, helped design a range of exotic, multi-cylinder racers that quickly became legendary: the 1964 RC115 (a 50cc eight-valve twin that revved to 21,000 rpm), the '65 RC147 (a five-cylinder 20-valve 125 that revved to 19,500), and the immortal RC165, a 24-valve, six-cylinder 250 that redlined at nearly 15,000 rpm. (Hold that thought...)

A decade later, while America celebrated its bicentennial, Iri and his team developed a new plan for Honda's excitement-starved streetbike lineup. It included a couple of new twins to bolster the middle of the lineup (a vertical twin and a transverse vee that would become the CX line) along with two flagship concepts. One was an all-new CB750, which would become the twin-cam, 16-valve F-model introduced in late '78. The other would be a sporty, performance-oriented open-classer... But what that concept comprised, they did not yet know.

The obvious direction was a high-end CB1000 based on Honda's successful RCB

endurance racer. But Iri and his team knew that a 1,000cc four with two cams and 16 valves—as good as it would likely be—could be seen as merely "catching up," not setting the bar a notch or three higher, as they very much wanted. And that's when the idea for something *completely different* surfaced—something unique and stunning, maybe even something that recalled Iri's days in the GP trenches.

Very little is known of the discussion that transpired after the very first mention of a six-cylinder production streetbike based on that crazy, 250cc RC165 racer. We can imagine the excitement somewhere in Honda's then-new R&D facility in Asaka that day and do know that Project 422 was quickly green-lighted. Interestingly, upper management also approved the development of the 1,000cc four project, which would run concurrently with Project 422. The thinking here was based purely on competition: Let's see how each bike works at the prototype stage and then make our decision on which to actually produce.

A pair of teams—one for each of the two open-class concepts—quickly got to work. The styling team for the six-cylinder project, headed by Minoru Morioka and Yoshitaka Omori, began with rough sketches, which ran the gamut from an almost CB750 lookalike to a futuristic jet-fighter theme. Besides a bit of semi-integrated bodywork and one attempt at a small cockpit fairing, the shapes were familiar. Slowly over



The instrument cluster (top) was known during development as the "Mickey Mouse" panel. Tail cowl (above) was a fortunate addition late in development; the CBX looked much tamer without it.

the summer months the shapes began to morph into ones we recognize now: the dramatically sculpted tank, wide at the front and narrow in back, and that bold, waisted engine leading the way without frame tubes marring the view.

In truth, the first mock-ups had downtube frames, engineers using the reasonably stiff and functional cage design as a starting point. It had worked on the RC; surely it would be okay on the street-bike. But two considerations removed it from consideration: One was aesthetics. That engine, which Mr. Honda himself insisted must be sexy and beautiful in addition to being powerful, had to be *seen*. "Mr. Honda wanted the most powerful engine," Morioka remembers, "and at the same time paid enormous attention on how the engine looked."

Another problem was packaging. The new engine's narrow cylinder pitch and the number of pipes exiting in such a small space made it extremely difficult to use traditional downtubes without serious angling of pipes and/or tubes, which would spoil the look. So fairly early, engineers incorporated a downtube-less design, where the engine would bolt to the frame from above and in back. "If those tubes had to be bent," Omori says, "it would look like hell. That's

why we changed it." Repercussions would follow, though not for months.

Things moved quickly during the summer, each team motivated by excitement as well as pressure from above to finish quickly, as both open-class projects had been fast-tracked from the very beginning. Iri's knowledge of the RC165 project helped the powerplant team tremendously; he'd been there before, knew the ins and outs of such a wide and powerful engine, knew where problems would crop up, and knew how to fix them.

By early 1977, stylists had produced sketches of what higher-ups would confirm as the Six's final look. Styling mules were assembled with as many pre-production pieces as possible, as well as sand-cast engine parts. The visual results were decidedly mixed; the bike's front half was strong and sexy, but the back was lacking something. That something, according to Omori, was a tailsection.

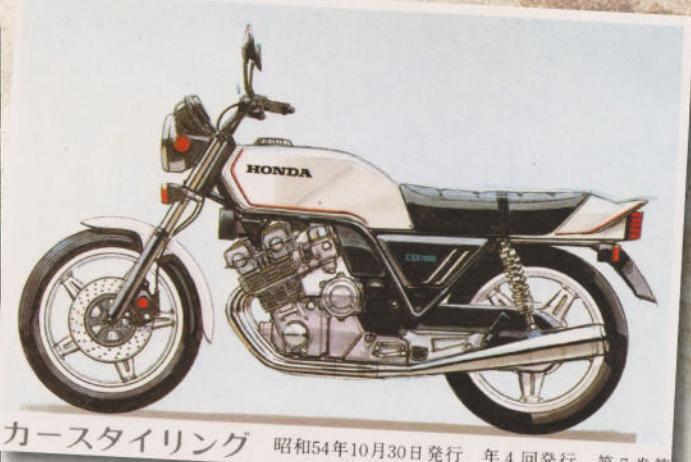
"At that point," Omori says, "we were already close to the final version, [but there was no] tail cowl. The R&D director said to me, 'This bike has no punch. Can you do something with it?' I then asked CB750F designer Hitoshi Ikeda if I could try something, and he agreed. I ended up making a winged tail cowl. Ikeda asked if it was a gimmick, so I asked Shinji Kakatani of

the Blue Helmets [Honda's in-house race team], who said it would be effective. When we contacted Mr. Morioka, who was away in Europe, for approval, we learned he was working on the same thing for the 750F!"

Prototype testing was by now in full swing, and Iri was worried. "The biggest problem [with the CBX] was the weight," Iri says. It had climbed to more than 450 pounds. "How to [reduce weight] was our biggest headache." The bike would soon go on a strict weight-loss regimen, getting aluminum triple clamps and handlebars and other lighter bits. But it still ended up being nearly 600 pounds full of fuel in production form.

With the CB1000F prototype also up and running (the bike would eventually become the CB900F), it was time to decide. "[The 1000F] was extremely light," Iri remembers, "and actually faster than the CBX, [especially] on the track. But we felt there was something exhilarating and exciting about the Six that was lacking on the four-cylinder bike. The rumble of the exhaust, the feeling of acceleration, the vibration, its smooth, high-revving engine. [There was] something in the CBX that could not be measured, [and that] made it a very sexy machine."

"There was a big discussion which machine to go with," Iri continues. But



カースタイリング 昭和54年10月30日発行 年4回発行 第7巻第



The CBX's final sketch from '77 (upper right) is reasonably close to the bike's actual look. The first mockup (above), assembled in '76, was homely, but it was a start. Assembly-line workers installing a bank of six carburetors (top) at the Sayama factory in mid-'78. Note the way the carbs angle toward the center.

based on Honda's desire to build "a totally new superbike, one unlike any that had been made before, we chose the CBX."

Still, pre-production handling problems persisted, all connected to weight and frame-rigidity issues. According to Ian Foster's amazingly detailed new book *The CBX*, (from usedcbxparts.com or mrcbx@att.net; \$50) Iri discovered the depth of the handling issues when larger and more aggressive American Honda test riders rode the bikes at Suzuka. The lighter Japanese riders hadn't had the same problems. "This opened our eyes," Iri says in Foster's book. "Honda knew how to make engines, but in our minds frames were not that important." Iri explained that, in those days, frame engineers weren't talking to the engine guys, and he realized after the CBX's release that Honda needed to find a way to make more rigid frames as its engines got more powerful.

In late 1977, a handful of pre-production machines were prepared for testing and some early press coverage. In November, Honda invited some American dealers and European editors to Suzuka, Honda's primary test venue at the time.

One of those machines made its way to Southern California in October for *Cycle* magazine to sample exclusively, the results of which made it into the magazine's February 1978 issue. *Cycle* editor Cook Neilson was flabbergasted by the bike's performance and chutzpah.

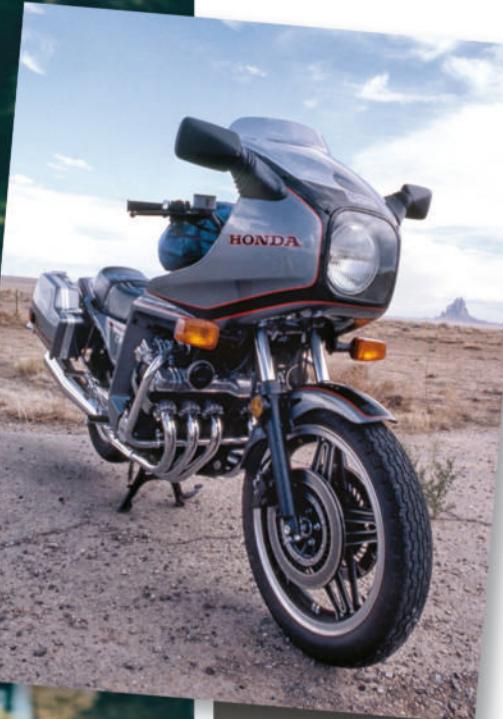
"We are at Willow Springs Raceway this dark, sharp morning to see, feel and ride a motorcycle which much is rumored but nothing is known," Neilson wrote. "Four days later—two at Willow Springs, one at the Webco dynamometer, and one split between Orange County Raceway and American Honda—we came to believe that in the 1,047cc, 24-valve, double-overhead-camshaft CBX-Six, Honda had the Haymaker it wanted. There are flaws here and there, signs of haste and certain ambiguities. But the objective—to build the fastest production motorcycle for sale anywhere in the world—has been met. The bike is more than fast; it is magic."

The American Honda dealers in Japan for that November introduction at Suzuka were treated to some magic, too, but of a cinematic variety. At a local theater the night before they learned of the CBX's

existence, Honda showed a film that made many of them literally jump for joy.

"It was probably the most excited I've ever seen dealers," longtime Honda man Jon Row remembers. "The sequence on screen was a pan shot, starting at one side of the engine, shot from the front, looking at the exhaust pipes. As the image moved left to right, you saw the cylinder block come into view, then one head pipe, then two, and then three. And when dealers noticed extra space for the cam chain after the third pipe, and realized Honda had built a Six, the room just exploded! Some were standing on their chairs. It was nuts! They'd been getting beat up by the Z1 for so many years, and this was retribution. Honda needed something exciting, and this did the trick, at least emotionally."

We were divided in our opinions. *Motorcyclist* editor Dale Boller said, "We need this motorcycle like we need a hole in the head. Its single greatest virtue—raw speed—can't even be experienced legally." Staffer Brad Zimmerman, in that same May 1978 issue, respectfully disagreed: "While parked it evokes an atmosphere of 'just try me,' challenging your ego to jump aboard



Honda produced sport-touring versions of the CBX for '81 and '82 (above). Our photo model is a '79-spec CBX fitted with the available-from-Honda (and standard in Europe) sport kit, which features lower-than-stock alloy bars and rearset pegs. The kit is virtually unobtainium now.

for an acceleration thrill. I would buy our testbike immediately. But Honda won't sell it because it's a prototype."

Press reports were generally positive, but early sales were not brisk. "It was a combination of things, I think," remembers Bob Troxel, who worked at a Wichita, Kansas, Honda/Kawasaki shop during the 1970s. "Folks were curious and interested, and we sold some. But generally speaking, the CBX was seen as big, heavy, expensive, and complex. I love them and own an '82 still. But it just didn't connect well enough with customers for it to be a sales smash."

The CBX, in its initial guise as a stripped-down sporting machine lasted just two years, 1979 and '80. The '80-spec machine differed quite a bit from the unfiltered original, too, with less power (98 ps, due to new German regs), an 85-mph speedometer (US DOT silliness), black Comstar wheels, an air-assist fork, a 20-percent-higher capacity oil cooler, adjustable-damping shocks mated to a swingarm with better bushings, glossy side covers, a tailsection compartment, and some other detail changes. For '81 and '82, the CBX morphed into a serious sport-tourer, with more midrange, a slick Pro-Link single-shock rear suspension system, hard bags, a big fairing, and a whole different demeanor. And like its predecessor, it sold slowly.



Still, it's pretty hard to argue that the CBX didn't achieve what Honda needed at the time. It, along with the CB750F, CX500, and CB1000F prototype projects, yanked Honda out of its tech-less lethargy, proving to itself and the world that it still had the ability and foresight to build exciting motorcycles. Honda still *had it*. One could also argue that the CB900F, CB1100F, and the liquid-cooled, V-4 Sabres, Magnas, and Interceptors that followed benefitted from the momentum generated by the CBX.

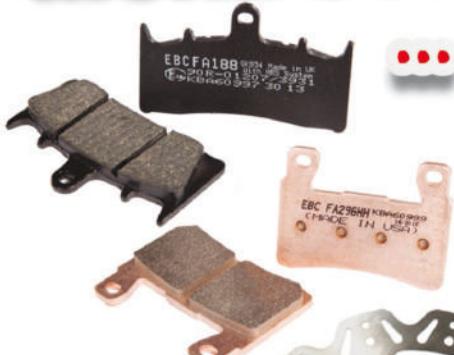
Cycle's Cook Neilson summed it up pretty well: "The CBX," he wrote, "rubs hard against the acceptable limits of

mechanical intricacy and weight, and anyone with a pragmatic view would take issue with both the bike's complexity and its total performance concept. But the Six was not built for pragmatists. It was built for romantics, for people with soft spots in their hearts for mechanical maximum expressions, for people whose specific reasons for motorcycling match the CBX's specific reasons for being built. The CBX is an immensely flattering bike with perfect elegance and total class, and history will rank it with those rare and precious motorcycles which will never, ever be forgotten."

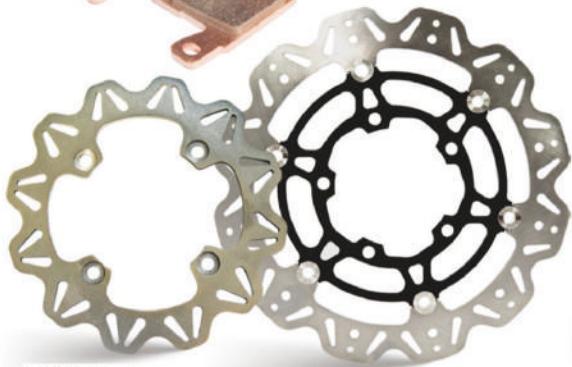
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OLYMPIA EXPEDITION JACKET

As motorcyclists we're getting pretty accustomed to machines with incredible versatility, and, in trying to keep up, there's plenty of gear on the market that claims three (or even four) seasons of capability. Olympia's Expedition jacket is one of those pieces.

The Expedition has a biblically long list of features, from CE-approved armor in the elbows, shoulders, and back to the "Mega Vent Panel" aeration system designed for maximum ventilation. The outer shell is made from a combination of 500- and 2,000-denier Cordura, sprinkled with Scotchlite reflective piping and five external pockets. There's a mesh lining bonded to the inside of the jacket, as well as a zip-in insulated liner and an included waterproof shell that can fit under or over the outer shell.

It's a complicated jacket, but then so are adventures, right? Many of the Expedition's bells and whistles work just right. The neoprene-framed collar is easy on neck skin and has a clever hook-and-loop setup that allows the top of the collar to be cinched tight or left loose without flapping in the wind. Circumference of the sleeves and waist is also adjustable, and the cuffs are thoughtfully designed so they can be worn over or under gloves.

More good news arrived with the first rain. The waterproof shell (splashed with hi-vis material, incidentally) fit neatly over the outside of the Expedition, repelling an hour or so of freezing rain, both while riding and during frequent stops. A nifty spandex hood concealed in the collar of the rain shell unwinds to run under the helmet and keep water from creeping down your neck. The included shell fitting over the jacket is brilliant. Why let your jacket soak through to a waterproof liner? Olympia gets it.

There are, however, a couple of drawbacks. It's a boxy fit—at 6-foot-2 and 185 pounds, this editor is too long and lean for the Expedition—though if you're more the stocky or barrel-chested type this jacket might hold you just the way you like. Also, the intricate design wore thin. Even after multiple long rides wearing this jacket it was hard not to grab the wrong zipper pull (some color coding would help) or reach into a vent instead of the poorly placed lower pockets.

To us, it doesn't offer quite the finish or usability we would expect for the \$430 MSRP. Aside from a few small design flaws and complexities, it's very well equipped and does deliver warmth, waterproofness, and incredible ventilation.

—Zack Courts



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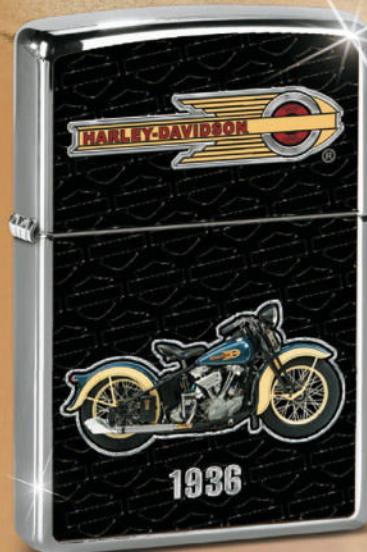
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JULIA LAPALME

TO PLUG OR NOT TO PLUG

Flat Flats happen. But how to repair punctures in tubeless tires—and even if they should be repaired—is a tricky subject. It all depends on who you ask. The truth is riders fix flats all the time, but they could be plugging away indiscriminately with limited knowledge of the proper repair process or the risks associated with riding on a repaired tire. In this installment of *MC Garage*, we'll explore the issue from several angles so you can make a more informed decision if you "pick up a nail" on the road.

One of the reasons a concise answer on plugging punctures is so elusive is because each tire manufacturer, which every tire-plug manufacturer will ultimately defer to if pressed on the subject, has its own take on the topic.

Continental, Michelin, Pirelli, and Shinko's position on dealing with punctures is clear as day: Don't even bother carrying a plug kit. "Call a tow truck," is how one VP of marketing replied when asked what to do when you get a flat. These tire manufacturers assert that there are too many variables involved, from the puncture to the repair, and that there is

simply too much at risk in terms of rider safety and liability to condone it, even in an emergency. Most dealerships and repair shops share this sentiment.

Fair enough. After all, your tires are the only part of your motorcycle that connects it to the road, and a rapid deflation resulting from an improper repair or unseen internal damage could cause a lot more parts of your motorcycle to make contact with the road. Even so, a canned "no" is not what riders want to hear when they just got a flat on a nearly new, \$250 tire.

Other brands, specifically Avon, Bridgestone, Dunlop, and Metzeler, offer an opinion that's more in line with what consumers would hope to hear: Yes, punctures can be plugged in an emergency situation, and a repair that both fills the wound (plug) and seals the damage (patch) that is installed by a professional can even be considered permanent if specific criteria are met.

While Avon, Bridgestone, Dunlop, Metzeler, and the RMA (the Rubber Manufacturer's Association, the nation's preeminent voice on the topic of tires) all agree that a combined plug/patch applied

That Is The Question!

from the inside of the tire is the only acceptable permanent repair, each group has its own requirements and restrictions. Here are a few areas they all agree on.

Everyone who says that you can plug a tire (including tire-plug makers) agree that the repairable area is limited to the crown of the tire. "You cannot plug a sidewall because it doesn't have the structure to hold the plug," says TJ Tennent, Bridgestone's engineering manager. Not even the entire treaded area is fair game, since "closer to the sides the carcass flexes too much and the seal won't take," Max Martin of Grypp says. "The repair has to be within the belt package," Tennent adds, which limits the repairable area to the center 50 percent of the tire. There must also be at least 1/32 inch (0.8mm) of tread remaining on the tire. Any less and the tire could flex too much to retain the repair.

The size and shape of the damage is another important factor. Tears or oblong punctures cannot be permanently repaired, and opinions on the size of round holes that can acceptably be repaired run the gamut from 3mm (Avon) to 6.8mm (Dunlop). Assuming the puncture isn't too



MILES THIS
MONTH

6023

Winter be damned, there have
been road trips aplenty for our
long-termers in the last month.

big (research suggests that 90 percent of all punctures are the size of a 16-penny nail [4.1mm] or smaller) and was made in the right area, the tire will still need to be dismounted for inspection and have the appropriate plug/patch installed.

Beyond those very basic guidelines, opinions begin to diverge. As an example, Avon prohibits tires with "wound on" belting or tires with a speed rating higher than V (up to 149 mph) from being repaired, while Bridgestone contends that any repaired tire forfeits its speed rating and is limited to 80 mph. Dunlop says that any tire that's previously seen a liquid sealant is excluded from repair, while Metzeler simply defers to "your country's regulations" to determine if repair is legal in the first place (in America it is). When it comes down to it, if you really want to know the specifics for your tires, your best bet is to contact the company embossed on the sidewall.

As stated, every manufacturer that permits permanent repairs says that an off-the-rim inspection is mandatory. Why? Since tubeless tires are unlikely to bleed all of their pressure at once when punctured, it's possible for the rider to be unaware of a leak and cruise along on a deflating tire. This isn't uncommon and leads to the possibility of internal tire damage, either from overheating or from the puncturing object gouging the tire's inner surface after deflation has occurred.

Additionally, escaping air can creep between the plies of the tire, encouraging tread separation. This scenario is of particular concern on steel-belted tires (the majority of motorcycle tires on the road today are steel belted) since any ingress of moisture can cause the steel strands to rust and eventually fail.

Any damage to the structure of the tire could lead to a catastrophic failure, and a thorough inspection of both surfaces of the tire is the best way to nip a catastrophe in the bud—that, or just replace the tire, which is *always* the first recommendation, regardless of who you ask.

Great, but what if you can't replace the tire or dismount it for inspection and repair because, say, you're in the middle of nowhere with no cell service and a descending sun? "If you need to get off the side of the road, you do what you have to do to get to a safer location," Bridgestone's Tennent says.

That's where the myriad aftermarket tire-plug kits come into play. Common options include the ubiquitous rubber-impregnated ropes, Stop & Go's mushroom plugs, Dynaplugs' brass-tipped ropes, Grypps' screw-in "cargols," and liquid products from Slime and Ride On. Each product has its own purported benefits, whether it be ease of use or affordability, but the underlying idea is that they're all *emergency* repairs. Out of all the options, mushroom-style plugs like those sold by Stop & Go are the only form of temporary repair endorsed by manufacturers, namely Avon and Metzeler. And don't forget that once you plug the tire, you'll still need to inflate it. See the "Airing Up" sidebar at right for your inflation options.

If you began reading this piece with a firm stance on tire repair and now feel like you're standing on shaky ground, we apologize. Ignorance is bliss! As we said in the beginning of this piece, how you should go about dealing with a flat really depends on who you ask. And, ultimately, the only person left to ask is yourself. Hopefully after reading this you are better equipped to make your own decision.

—Ari Henning

TUBING IT IN A TUBELESS RADIAL TIRE Is An Inner Tube An Acceptable Emergency Fix?

"It used to be a solid no," says Sukoshi Fahey, sales and marketing manager at Avon. "But opinions have evolved." The original cause for concern was tire flex, which could cause the tube to overheat and rupture. However, today's tubeless radials are more rigid and unlikely to cause issues when used with an appropriate-size inner tube as an emergency repair, but other manufacturers, including Bridgestone and Metzeler, still prohibit it.

A tube may serve as an acceptable way to deal with a punctured tire, but if you are considering carrying a tube (and the tools needed to remove the wheel and tire), why not just carry the appropriate patch/plug and perform a more reliable, potentially permanent repair?



AIRING UP

Because Sometimes You Want
More Pressure In Your Life

There are numerous ways to plug a punctured tubeless tire and lots of methods to re-inflate it too. For side-of-the-road repairs, the three most common sources of pressure are CO2 cartridges, compact electric compressors, and old-fashioned hand pumps.

A compressor that runs off your bike's battery offers unlimited air supply anytime you need it, but these devices can be bulky and expensive. Manual pumps like those used for bicycles (high-volume pumps designed for mountain-bike tires are the way to go here) also offer unlimited fill-ups, but they also require a tremendous amount of elbow grease!

CO2 cartridges are another popular option. They're compact and easy to use, but it takes a lot of them to fill a tire (six 12-gram canisters will inflate a 180/55-17 tire to about 20 psi according to our tests), and you can only use them once. When discharging CO2, keep in mind that the gas exiting the canister is extremely cold (about -50 Fahrenheit), so protect your hands and remember that the tire pressure will rise quite a bit as the gas warms to ambient temperature; there's no need to inflate to final pressure with the canisters.

Another option for airing up in an emergency is a parasitic hose with two clamp-on female ends. This device isn't commercially available but should prove easy to assemble at home and will allow you to draw pressure from another vehicle's tires in an emergency.

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Customer Rating
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MOTORCYCLE LIFT

PITTSBURGH INDUSTRIAL

• Lift range: 5-1/4" to 17"

LOT 69995 shown
60536/61632

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~~\$9499~~ comp at \$135

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ELECTRIC WINCH
WITH WIRELESS
REMOTE CONTROL

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61369 shown

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capacity

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9 PIECE FULLY POLISHED
COMBINATION WRENCH SETS

Customer Rating
★★★★★

PITTSBURGH

WOW SUPER COUPON

2.5 HP, 21 GALLON
125 PSI VERTICAL
AIR COMPRESSOR

Customer Rating
★★★★★

CENTRALPNEUMATIC
LOT 69091/67847 shown
61454/61693/62803

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SUPER COUPON

SUPER WIDE TRI-FOLD
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Haul-Master

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53520949

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• 17 ft. working height

• 17 ft. overall height

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KEN CONDON



SITUATIONAL AWARENESS



Let's say you're an expert roadracer with a shelf full of trophies. Will your ability to brake and corner to the extreme edge of control keep you from harm on the street? Those trophies didn't win themselves, it's true, but if you were quick to answer "yes" then you are fooling yourself.

Don't get me wrong. Your highly advanced track skills can save your bacon when dealing with a curve that tightens suddenly or when you have to stop rapidly to avoid a collision. However it's a fool who relies on superior skills alone to arrive home unscathed because, unlike on the racetrack, street hazards are unpredictable and less forgiving. You might get away with it enough to think you're doing fine, but you'll eventually face a hazard that even your awesome skills will not be able to handle.

What trumps badass cornering and braking talents is superior brain power that avoids the need to use those bitchin' skills in the first place. Up first are strategies to deal with common hazards. You already have a lot of these strategies in your pocket. Some are so obvious that you might not even think of them as strategies. Examples include slowing down when approaching a busy intersection even if you

have the green light, changing lane position to be more visible, weaving just enough to catch the attention of a driver waiting at the intersection, and covering your brakes to reduce reaction time, just in case.

Having expert-level control skills and smart strategies are great, but even they aren't enough. Without situational awareness you might not recognize when a hazard is developing and fail to act in time. Situational awareness makes you alert to clues that allow you to "read" the environment and predict when a potentially bad situation is about to unfold before anything obvious actually happens. Unusual changes in traffic flow or the sight of unexpected brake lights can indicate trouble ahead.

The best riders have finely tuned, hi-def radar that can pick up subtle anomalies like a flash of sunlight off a windshield or the head and arm movements of a driver about to advance across your path. Scan the road ahead and ask yourself if the "picture" looks as it should. If not, then slow down and cover those brakes!

Situational awareness involves more than just your most familiar senses. It also includes your sixth sense. You know—that gut feeling you get when something just

isn't right. Developing your sixth sense takes a deeper level of awareness and conscious attention. Start by recognizing what your intuitive voice sounds like and pay attention when it speaks. Every time you listen to that little voice it makes it louder and clearer.

Situational awareness is critical when mixing it up with other drivers, but it also plays an important role even when it's just you and the open road. Stay sharp so you can spot the often-subtle clues that help you identify a corner's radius and determine whether conditions require a reduced entry speed or an altered cornering line. Does the surface camber slope away, reducing ground clearance and grip? What are the chances of sand or gravel or a rockslide around the corner?

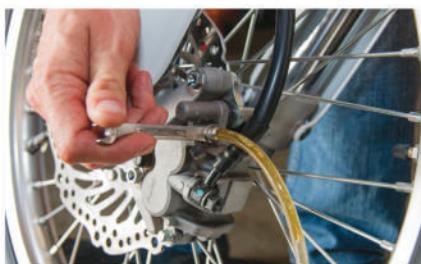
Remember that superior cornering and braking skills are your *second* line of defense, not your first! Developing your physical skill to a high level will allow you to respond correctly and accurately if things go wrong. But believe me, your odds of a crash go way up if you think your physical skills alone will save you. Dulled attention leads to knee-jerk reactions and the need for heroic measures that might not save the day.

LET IT BLEED

Q Thanks, MC's Ari Henning, for your how-to article on bleeding brakes in the November issue. I'm happy to see I've been doing it (mostly) right all this time. But I have a question: How do you bleed the brakes on bikes with ABS? I have a 2015 Harley Ultra Classic with ABS, and I've been led to believe it needs to be connected to a computer in order to open up the valves in the ABS pump. Is there fluid in the ABS module that can't get out unless the module is "activated" somehow? I'd hate to have to go to the dealer for what is a straightforward job on a non-ABS bike. Is this my only option aside from buying the expensive computer myself?

Chris Hinds/ Columbus, OH

A Most bikes with ABS are designed to allow complete flushing of the brake fluid through the ABS actuator. This is the case with Honda's ABS, as well as with several other Japanese makes. *Motorcyclist*'s shop guy was, in a former life, an Aprilia and Moto Guzzi tech, and he says the Italian manufacturers don't bother purging the ABS module during a brake bleed. In other words, you bleed the system as though it didn't have ABS.



As with other things, however, Harley-Davidson goes its own way here and recommends using a dealer-only computer called the Digital Technician II. On a Rushmore bike like yours, the front and rear brakes are linked, and the linking is a function of the ABS. The ABS function is controlled by an electro-hydraulic control unit (EHCU), which contains brake fluid and electronically controlled solenoid valves. To properly flush the brake fluid, the EHCU must be activated by the Digital Tech or the old fluid will remain trapped in the system.

You could probably bleed your Harley's brakes as you would a non-ABS system and get away with it. But there's also your safety to think about and your bike's warranty. Paying a dealer to bleed your brakes the Harley way seems worth the expense.

—Jerry Smith



YOUR TURN!

We know you have a question you're just dying to ask, so send it to us already at: mcmail@bonniercorp.com

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4 PEEVES OF THE PEOPLE

 In the retail business, we try to get it right and, I think, succeed most of the time. But, as they say, "stuff happens," and we have been known to make our customers a little testy—sometimes for good reason and sometimes not. Here are the complaints I hear most often.

1/ THE LACK OF FOLLOW-UP FROM

A SALESPERSON. How many times have you inquired about a bike you see

on a dealer's online showroom only to be left waiting for a response? How about walking around on the showroom floor wondering if you've actually discovered the secret to being invisible? It can seem like all or nothing from the sales department when shopping for a motorcycle, and I know how frustrating this can be. Either we won't leave you alone or we don't pay any attention to you. We try to read the situation and be available in case

you have questions but stay at a respectful distance if you're just looking. But we can't read minds. If you're ready with your questions, please let us know! Oh, and not returning phone calls? I just don't get that. No excuses.

2/ SERVICE APPOINTMENTS AND REPAIRS ARE TWO WEEKS OUT.

Hey, when I need something I need it now. Making an appointment to have your bike serviced or repaired can be a pain whether you roll in on your bike and wait on it or catch a ride to work and pick it up in the afternoon. Unfortunately, when riding season hits everyone has the same idea, so we get slammed doing routine maintenance as well as changing tires and batteries. The best solution? Schedule service during the off-season so that your bike is ready to go when spring arrives. Keep the bike on a battery charger and properly stored, and there's no reason to have the service just before the riding season starts.

3/ THE KNOWLEDGE GAP. Not every member of the sales staff has the specs and history of every bike down cold; some of us even have to look stuff up now and again. But I hear often from our customers that flat-out ignorance of the products—price, basic specs, availability of colors, and trim levels—is one of those hot topics. I expect that if you're really serious about a certain bike that you'll be well educated, and I'll try my best to keep up. But doing business with a dealer whose staff is unknowledgeable—or, worse, assured but *wrong*—can be more frustrating than any deep discounts would offset.

4/ HIGH PRICES. I know it can sometimes feel like the dealership—in particular the parts and accessories portions—is out to touch your wallet as often as you do. The truth is that we can't compete with online retailers in terms of volume, so we can't compete on price. But we can provide service, both before the sale (helping you get the right gear or the right parts) and after (in case you really don't like what you bought). That's what you're paying for: service and access to immediate gratification. And don't assume we can't be flexible, especially if you're a regular customer.

Jeff Maddox is the sales manager for a multiline dealership in the Midwest. Questions for him? Email us at mcmail@bonniergecorp.com.

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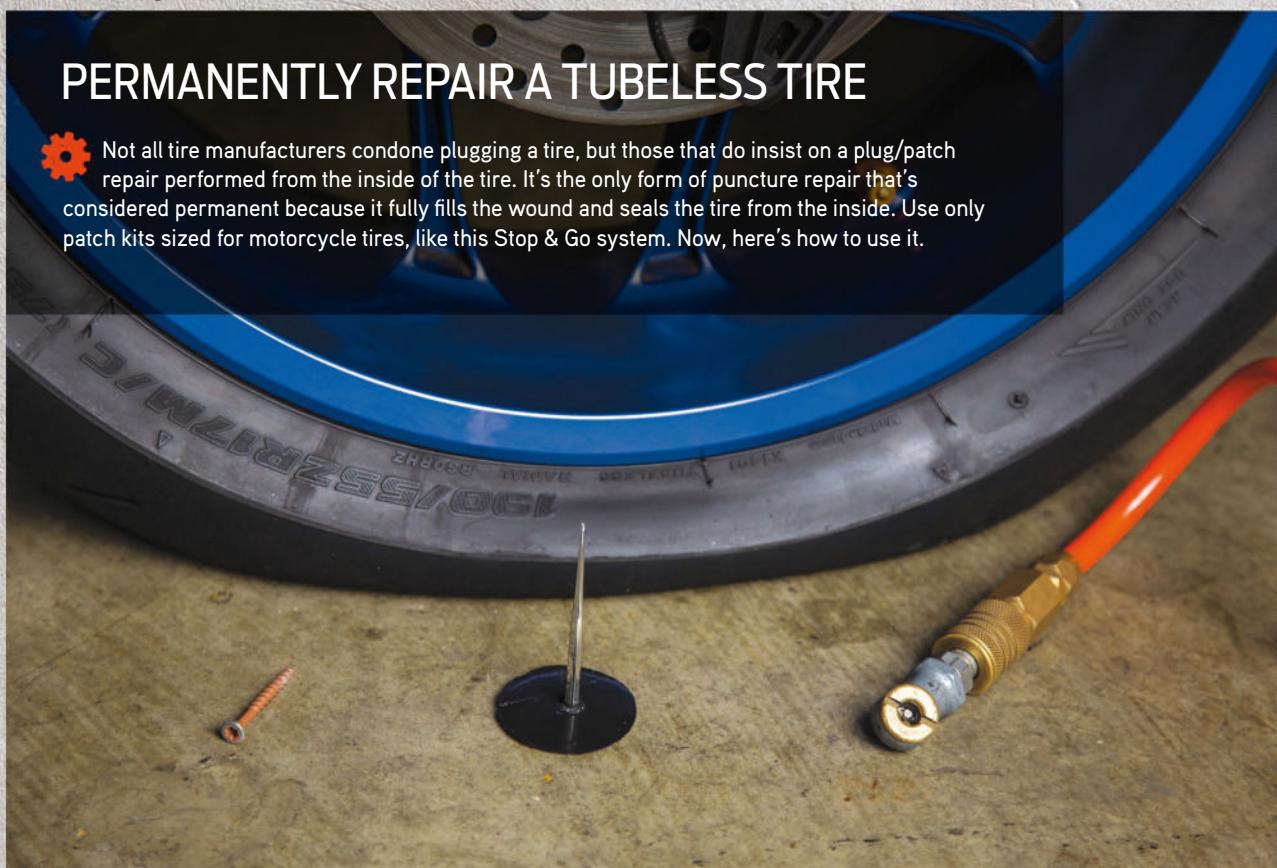
AIRHAWK
COMFORT SEATING SYSTEM

WORDS: Ari Henning

PERMANENTLY REPAIR A TUBELESS TIRE



Not all tire manufacturers condone plugging a tire, but those that do insist on a plug/patch repair performed from the inside of the tire. It's the only form of puncture repair that's considered permanent because it fully fills the wound and seals the tire from the inside. Use only patch kits sized for motorcycle tires, like this Stop & Go system. Now, here's how to use it.



1
Mark the puncture, remove the offending item, and then dismount the tire. Yes, you *have* to remove the tire! Be aware that punctures on the edge of the tread or in the sidewall cannot be repaired. The same goes for holes larger than 7mm in diameter.



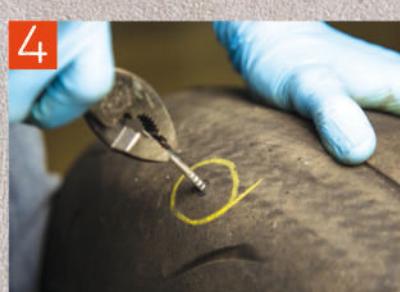
3
Prepare the repair site by buffing the inner liner of the tire to expose fresh rubber. Buff an area slightly larger than the patch portion of your plug/patch. Then ream the hole to clear it of debris.



5
Cut the quill flush with the tread and then carefully press the patch into place. Use your thumbs to force air out from under the patch by pressing from the center of the patch toward the perimeter.



2
Carefully inspect the tread and inner liner for damage, which most often occurs from being run underinflated. Any bubbling or signs of delamination are cause for tire replacement. This inspection is the critical part of the repair that can only be performed with the tire removed.



4
Apply rubber cement to the repair site and allow it to dry for several minutes. Remove the covering from the patch head and push the quill through the hole from the inside. Pull it flush with the inner liner.



6
Reinstall the tire and inflate it to the recommended pressure. Inspect the repair for air-tightness with soapy water or saliva. Recheck the repair after the first few miles of riding, and keep an eye on the repair throughout the life of the tire.

Indian Scout

WRIST: Brian Hatano

MSRP (2015): \$11,299

MILES: 7,126

MPG: 39

MODS: Rear fender mod, Biltwell taillight and plate bracket, Rizoma Club rear turn indicators, CRG bar-end mirrors

UPDATE
13

Saving the best for last is certainly a cliché move, but that's exactly what I did. The final modification is one that I planned on doing since day one when I saw the custom Wall of Death Scout. Since then I've had plenty of time to think about how much of the fender to cut and what other changes would be needed to achieve the look that I was going for.

And as more and more custom Scouts began to appear on the Internet, I paid particularly close attention to what people were doing to the rear fender. I saw a couple of very nice hand-fabricated fenders, but going full custom was not what I had in mind, nor would it be a practical weekend mod for most Scout owners. I wanted to keep it simple and doable for anyone who liked the result.

The problem that I was seeing with all of the Scout fender bobs was that regardless of how the tailsection was trimmed, the profiles looked out of proportion—too much side material left in relation to the length of the fender, and too much of the tire remained hidden. The solution was simple: a nice radius job on the left and right sides.

The first step of a bob job is to tape off the section of the tail you want to remove. Once I determined the point where I wanted the cut to be, I used fixed reference points (in this case, the forward mounting bolts, which I knew would be equal on both sides) to make sure the cut would be symmetrical.

With my cut line laid out with tape, it was time to pull the fender from the bike, an easy task once the taillight and turn signal assembly is removed.

My tool of choice for a cut like this is a saber saw with variable-speed trigger and a good metal-cutting blade. I laid out more tape on either side of the cut to protect the paint from scratches. I definitely didn't want to repaint the fender if



Now that's a much better profile, don't you think? With relatively few mods, this Scout has a much more custom, even menacing look. Besides being loud, it's totally functional.



There are several tools you can use to cut a fender, but nothing beats a good saber saw. I used a Bosch fitted with a plastic shoe on the base plate and a good metal-cutting blade. Painter's tape protects the finish.



Here you can see exactly how much material I removed from the fender. Opening up the radius reveals more tire and gets away from the stubby look that most of the bobbed Scout fenders have.

I could avoid it. After bobbing the tail, I used an engineer's square set at 1 inch to measure and mark the left and right radius. My eyeball said that removing a 1-inch strip of material from the sides would look good and not expose the frame underneath. By running the square along the fender edge and marking the 1-inch pattern along the way, I would keep the original radius of the fender but reveal the whole sidewall of the tire.

The tip here is to avoid cutting too much material away. As you can see, removing just a small strip from the radius not only reveals the whole sidewall of the tire, but it also prevents the fender from looking fat and stubby. Rounding off the corner also helps with the finished appearance. To do so, I used a 1-quart

painter's cup for a pattern to round off the left and right corners evenly.

To complement the hot rod look of the bobbed and radius fender, I removed the front altogether, added CRG bar-end mirrors from a past project, and made it legal with Rizoma (rizoma.com) turn signals and Biltwell Mako taillight/license-plate bracket combo (biltwellinc.com; \$120), painted black of course.

Once I slipped that fender back into place, I fell in love with this bike all over again. As they say, you know you got the modification right when you park the bike and start to walk away but then turn around to check it out again. The Scout was a stylish cruiser in stock form, but with the final mods in place, I can't stop looking at it. I will definitely miss it.

BRIAN HATANO



BMW S1000XR

WRIST: Marc Cook

MSRP (2016): \$19,790 (as tested)

MILES: 12,510

MPG: 38

MODS: Another maintenance event, fork seals, new tires, different bar-end weights



UPDATE
03

Mamba's Brian Barthel is proud of his work on my long-term XR. It definitely came out cleaner than it went in. Thanks, Barth!

and it happened even before I'd left the building. Mamba Service Manager Jeff Granados found me and gave me the bad news about the Dunlop Q3s on the bike. The rear had picked up *three* small nails. A real shame, since I had managed to get the Dunlops to 2,680 miles with plenty of life left. In fact, I'm pretty sure I could have gotten this set to 4,000 miles, which is pretty good for a very sticky, compliant tire. Not, however, a fantastic wet-weather tire, which is why I had Mamba spoon on a set of Michelin Pilot Road 4 (motorcycle.michelinman.com; \$570/set).

Just before the service, I committed a simple bit of farkling by slightly modifying an SW-Motech Steel Toprack originally intended for a Yamaha FJR1300. There are six threaded holes in the BMW rack. I drilled new holes in the SWM rack to pick up four of them. It's worth noting that Twisted Throttle does have the SW-Motech Alu-Rack for the XR (twisted-throttle.com; \$195), but this requires a quick-detach plastic piece between the metal rack and whatever top box you want to use. To my eye, this is just a little less elegant than the steel rack that directly captures the mounting points for the Givi B33 Monokey top box (giviusa.com; \$195).

Finally, Suburban Machinery sent me a set of bar-end weights for use with the hand guards (suburban-machinery.com; \$84). These weigh 11 ounces each, 2 ounces more than the aftermarket HVMP bar ends I'd been using previously. Honestly, I can't tell the difference in vibration between the two, but each is far better than the lightweight original bar end. Now I'm just hoping we'll have that wet winter we've been promised to test those new Michelin.

Because the bike is getting ridden so much—by me and by the rest of the staff looking for a good time—the 12,000-mile maintenance was due just four months after the 6K. This time I leveraged the maintenance to visit some friends at Mamba Motorsports, a BMW dealer in northern Los Angeles County. The bike went in with a few wants, including the core maintenance, a check on the weeping right fork seal, and my heads-up to check the brake pads; when I'd changed the last set of tires, the front pads looked a little thin. Not enough to change them there and then but enough to plant the seed that these could be fast-wearing items—fueled by the knowledge that the XR had spent a full day getting flogged at the track.

The final bill was a little heady, I have to admit: \$977. Breaking it down: \$342 is for the basic 12K maintenance, including 1.5 hours of labor, \$58 worth of oil, an \$18 oil filter, and a \$50 air filter element. Brake pads boosted the price by \$316 for all three sets. I'll keep an eye on them from now on, but I suspect that this is the price you pay for incredibly strong brakes with superb feedback. That said, I'm tempted to try some aftermarket options.

Mamba took care of the leaking fork seal under warranty, and I don't know what the labor charge would be, but the parts alone would be almost \$90. I did get thrown a curve on this maintenance,

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KTM RC390

WRIST: Ari Henning

MSRP (2015): \$5,499

MILES: 2,675

MPG: 58

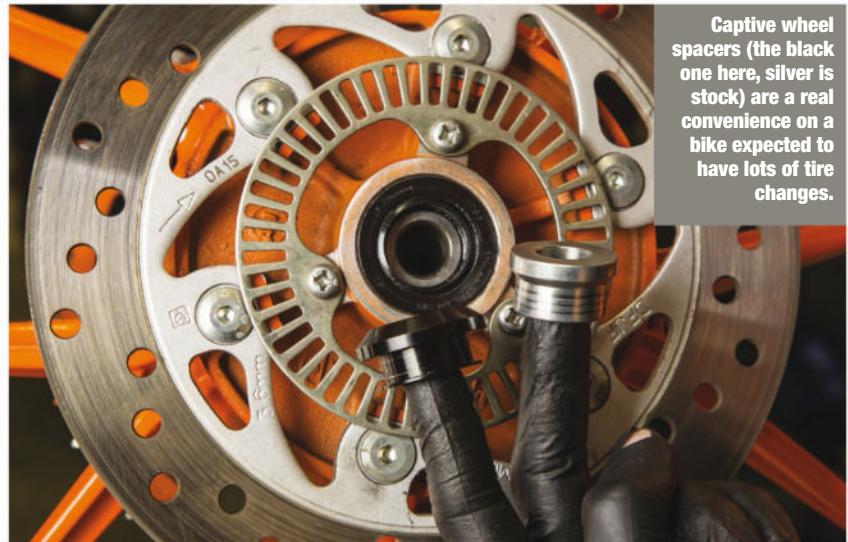
MODS: Wheel spacers, axle cup, axle blocks, and rearstand spools

UPDATE
05

The small-bike segment is growing quickly and so are the accessory options for those bikes. The RC390 has really helped kick aftermarket interest into high gear, and one of the companies that has taken a liking to the little orange bike is Fast Frank Racing.

A while back Frank Shockley at Fast Frank Racing (fastfrankracing.com) sent me a smattering of RC accessories to try out on my long-termer. Stuff like captive wheel spacers, precision axle blocks, sacrificial swingarm spools, and a rear-axle cup. I've been using his parts for months now, so I figured it was time I told the world how they work.

I wish I'd had the race-inspired captive wheel spacers installed when I took the RC390 to the track for our small-sportbike tire comparison last summer—you'll find



JULIA LAPALME

a video of it on our website under Video/MC Garage—because I struggled with the stock spacers through all five wheel changes! Frank's spacers have a thin lip at one end that you push past the bearing seals so the spacers remain attached to the hub. That means you don't have to worry about them falling out and rolling away like the stock spacers tend to do. The beveled outboard edges help ease

installation as well, and since the spacers are made of aluminum instead of steel, you save unsprung weight (six ounces, to be exact). The kit costs \$110 total (\$45 for the front and \$65 for the rear, which includes a replacement sprocket-carrier spacer). The spacers aren't something your friends are likely to notice, but you'll certainly appreciate them when it comes time to swap tires.

Kawasaki Versys 650 LT

WRIST: Spenser Robert

MSRP (2015): \$8,699

MILES: 7,735

MPG: 49

MODS: Super geeky top box

UPDATE
03

Now that the Versys and I have been going steady for a couple of months, bringing the bike back to Arizona (where I grew up) seemed like the right thing to do. Endless dirt roads, a balmy winter climate, and free meals at my parents' house are just a few of the perks for making the trip over. I also needed some time on the bike to test out some new luggage and to gauge how this ADV-style bike handles itself in some ADV-style terrain.

Unfortunately for my dirt-road traction, the Versys is still sporting the Pirelli Angel GT tires that were installed during the previous update. The tires have been exceptional on the street, particularly in some of the wet weather we've experienced lately, but dual-sport tires they are not. As soon as I got off the asphalt I noticed



SPENSER ROBERT

how much the rear tire slips in corners and the front tire washes out in the sand. But, bad as that may sound, none of it really bothered me as much as I thought it would.

Luggage? The verbosely named SW-Motech TraX EVO 38-liter ALU-BOX from Twisted Throttle (twistedthrottle.com; \$570, including mounts). Installation is a breeze. And once it's installed, the case doesn't appear to flex or wobble at all. The case itself is a little on the small side, but it is more than capable of accommodating

any helmet I've ever attempted to store. And, as an added bonus, the case also has the perfect dimensions to hold a 12-inch frozen pizza. You heard it here first, Versys-owning bachelors.

Now that our luggage situation is fully squared away (seriously, just look at how square that top case is) and my ADV appetite is temporarily satiated, next up will be some much-procrastinated mods. Gear indicator, power outlet, center-stand—oh, my!



Yamaha YZF-R1

WRIST: Zack Courts
MSRP (2015): \$16,490
MILES: 2,291
MPG: 34
MODS: None



UPDATE
05

I haven't really put any miles on the R1 since the last update, in part due to a shoulder injury but also because of a fairly major recall on Yamaha's part. According to the tuning fork folks, "Both second gear wheel and pinion gears in the transmission may break as a result of extremely high stress and/or improper shifting." If something in the transmission breaks, that can mean losing power to the rear wheel or, if things go really pear-shaped, "the transmission could lock up, causing loss of control that could result in a crash."

A couple of things here: One, Yamaha is obviously taking this very seriously, and even though actual problems have not been well documented, the company recommends all affected bikes (that is, all 2015 R1 and R1M models) be returned to the mother ship to be fixed. That's priority one. I don't have any reason to think that second gear in our bike is compromised, but I would certainly advocate complying with the recall.

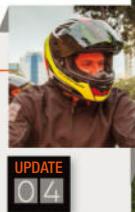
It's not clear how Yamaha discovered this issue, but I feel like it's worth mentioning that we tested an R1M in, "high-stress" situations—a full day at a second-gear-intensive track with 100-degree ambient temperatures—and had exactly zero issues.

It's hard to say what turnaround is for the fix. This bike was delivered back to us in about 10 days, which, in cruising R1 forums, seems right in the middle of what consumers are experiencing—some waiting only a few days, others a couple of weeks.

Next up for this bike, grabbier front brake pads, shorter gearing, and (eventually) a budget track-prep to see how the baseline KYB suspenders handle a club race.

KTM 1290 Super Adventure

WRIST: Aaron Frank
MSRP (2015): \$20,499
MILES: 9,979
MPG: 37
MODS: None



UPDATE
04



Just days before the holidays, I was greeted with the surest sign that winter has come at last: a flat motorcycle battery. I suspected the instrument panel was looking a little dimmer lately upon start-up, but I had been blaming it on the extra-dark winter sky, until I turned the key and nothing happened. The Super Adventure's been living on the Battery Tender since, but with resting voltage hovering around 11.6 according to the digital dashboard readout, it's clearly time to replace the battery.

A weak battery may or may not explain some strange electrical behavior I experienced just days before. Immediately upon starting the bike, I was greeted first with a suspension fault warning on the instrument panel, followed immediately by a more ominous "General Failure" screen. Like any good computer repair technician, I simply powered the bike down, restarted, and all the faults cleared.

Stranger yet: Often, if the SA is anything less than stock-still when you

press the starter button—if you're rolling it around the garage, for instance—the electronic system won't calibrate correctly and you'll see the suspension fault warning. Same thing if you stall the bike in slow-moving traffic and restart quickly while it's still rolling. This nearly always results in a suspension fault and sometimes a traction/stability control fault warning too.

Not a single one of these faults or failures was ever an actual problem that couldn't be cleared by simply cycling the ignition. The next step is to get the Super A into the dealer to see if KTM has updated software running all these systems. Like a lot of modern bikes, fixes are almost entirely of the digital kind. I hope it's that easy.

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2009–2013 HARLEY-DAVIDSON FLHTCU ELECTRA GLIDE ULTRA

 Right around the time the Wright Brothers took their first flight, Harley-Davidson built its first motorcycle. As crude as the plane that Wilbur and Orville sent aloft, that original Harley looked like nothing more than a spindly bicycle frame with an engine bolted to it. Just as aircraft evolved over the years, H-Ds became more complex, more sophisticated, and in some cases a lot more luxurious, which led to models like the sumptuously accoutered Electra Glide Ultra.

The last of the totally air-cooled FLHTCUs—models called “pre-Rushmore” in the parlance of our time—came with a Twin Cam 96 engine, a new 2-into-1-into-2 exhaust, and a six-speed Cruise Drive transmission with a lower final-drive ratio for better acceleration, all cradled in a new set of rubber mounts. For 2011, the 103ci engine, with the 96’s stroke but an eighth-inch more bore, became standard.

But the big news was the massively upgraded chassis, with a new single-spar backbone frame that increased the load capacity by 70 pounds. A new swingarm and engine isolation system were also added, along with a 17-inch front wheel (up from 16) and a 5-inch-wide rear wheel (up from 3). Front and rear suspension was recalibrated to take advantage of the fresh chassis.

On the road the lower final-drive ratio makes the TC96 seem punchier than its dyno

figures suggest—and the latter 103s are even better—and the revised chassis adds a degree or two of lean angle not offered by earlier models. Small stuff compared to the improved sense of rigidity and stability; the new platform is a huge upgrade over the willowy predecessor.

Used FLHTCUs aren’t hard to find, but they’re not cheap. The phrase “New York minute” describes the approximate interval between the purchase of a new Ultra and the addition of a boatload of expensive farkles, many to the engine. Some of these make more usable power while others just make more racket. Make sure the ones on the bike you’re looking at produce the desired effect; non-stock doesn’t always equal better. Get a list of the add-ons and check them with a reputable Harley tuner to see if it’s a good combination, and ask to see documentation showing who installed them. Generally speaking, you want an FLH as close to stock as you can find.

Harley-Davidson reliability has been the punch line of jokes for too long. Truth is, this generation of H-D is much more robust and reliable than its predecessors. The TC96 and 103 are well-developed engines—the worst thing they do is dump a lot of heat from the rear cylinder and pipe onto the rider during steamy weather. Maintenance requirements aren’t much more onerous than for, say, a Japanese touring cruiser. The

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1985–1998 H-D FLHTCU EVOLUTION

The 1,340cc Evolution engine ushered H-D out of the Iron Age and into the Aluminum Era. Still, it was primarily a cruiser engine and sometimes felt strained two-up at highway speeds. Base-gasket leaks were an issue in the early years, but the bugs have long since been worked out of the Evo, making it a good choice for budget-conscious buyers.



1999–2006 H-D FLHTCU TWIN CAM 88

The TC88 engine debuted in '99 and brought with it a more complex twin-camshaft design driven by timing chains. Tensioner failure was a headache at first, but later fixes, including gear-drive kits, largely cured it. Fuel injection replaced the carb. Few 88-inchers stayed that way, as Harley and the aftermarket competed to see who could sell more big-bore kits.



2007–2008 H-D FLHTCU TWIN CAM 96

With a Twin Cam 96 engine that delivered more low end, and a six-speed Cruise Drive transmission for more relaxed highway riding, Harley upped its touring game in '07. The chassis and suspension still needed some work despite air-adjustable shocks, but the amenities—an 80-watt sound system, cruise control, vented lower fairing with storage pockets, and plush seating for two—needed few improvements.

FLHTCU is not difficult to work on, and both parts and special tools are readily available. That’s great as an owner. But as a buyer you’re looking for the sure thing, so give preference to bikes with complete—repeat, *complete*—service records from a reputable dealer.

—Jerry Smith



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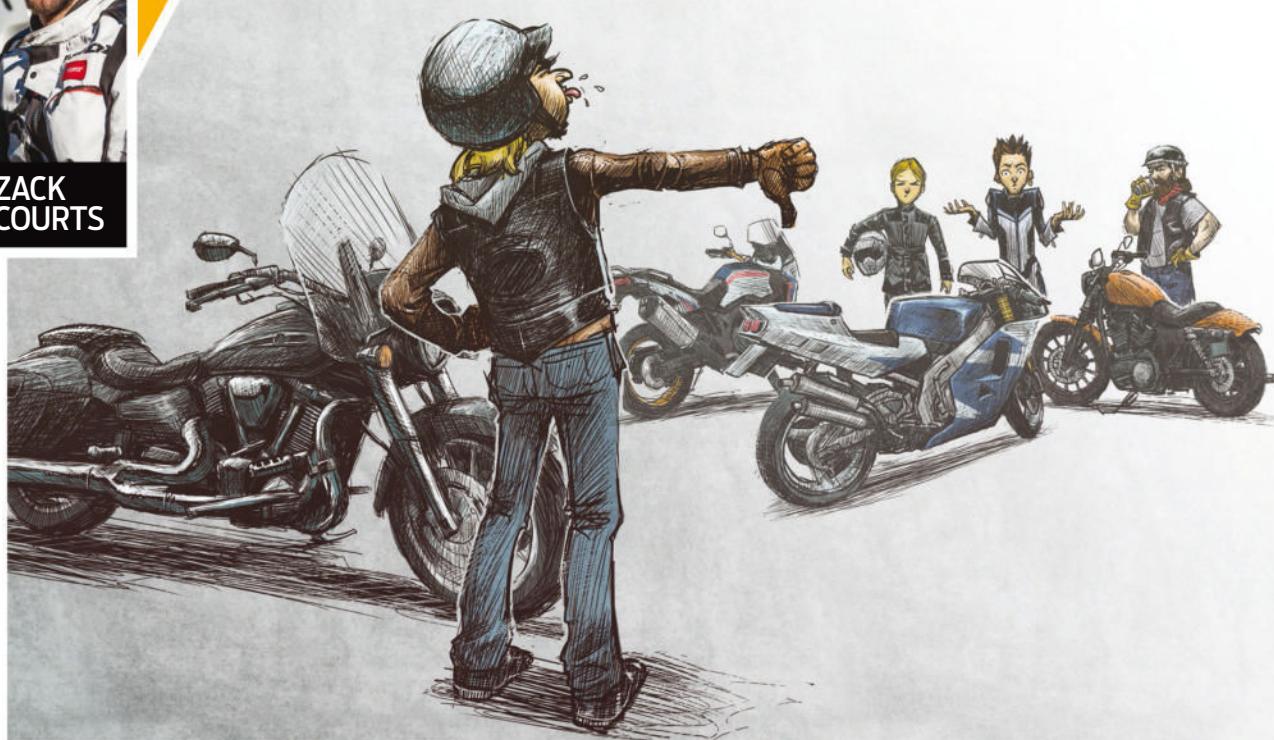
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ZACK COURTS

MEGAPHONE



• RICH LEE

YOUR BIKE SUCKS!

Recently, we received a letter from a reader telling us that he would not be renewing his subscription. We get a lot of letters from readers, but this one rattled something loose deep within the construct of my motorcycling brain.

His basic thesis was this: Everyone else's bike sucks. This fella's particular brand of two-wheeled whiskey is metric cruisers, and apart from that he's not interested. He says he "cares nothing" for dual-sports or Harleys and that he "can't stand crotch rockets." Furthermore, he states that he and his metric brethren are, "sick of taking s---t from the Harley crowd because we prefer to ride something that is going to bring us back home at the end of the ride."

Let me back up for a minute.

One thing I will not do is tell someone how to enjoy motorcycling. If someone is having fun on motorcycles, then I'm happy. But this kind of closed-mindedness bugs me. You can ride a motorcycle and enjoy it, and you can even shake your head and chuckle at all of the strange

things people do on two wheels. What I do not have tolerance for are people who dislike the variety of motorcycling.

Our two-wheeled fraternity has power in the allure of individuality, but it gets its true strength from the diversity of numbers. Each facet of the activity is made more interesting, and stronger, by the others. What this reader doesn't appreciate is that his metric cruiser is interesting only *because* of what the rest of motorcycling has to offer.

If people hadn't tried to do everything and go everywhere on two wheels, we wouldn't have suspension with a foot of travel, or 999cc engines with 175 hp, or Can-Am reverse trikes. And if we didn't have motocross bikes, or sportbikes, or trikes, then this guy's metric cruiser would just be a motorcycle like everyone else's. It would be an appliance—a washing machine or a generator that

nobody would care about until it broke. And that would be boring.

In short, keep your \$10, angry reader. I'm sad you're not interested in our magazine, mostly because I think it shows a fundamental lack of curiosity in the pastime you obviously enjoy. (Incidentally, stop projecting the negative energy you feel from Harley guys. Chances are they don't care what kind of bike you ride, and if they do, screw 'em.)

Fortunately, I have faith that motorcycling inherently attracts inquisitive, intelligent people, and hopefully there's a young enthusiast picking up a magazine or going to a website right now. With any luck they want to learn about the world of two wheels and will never develop this type of useless prejudice. Cruiser, dual-sport, streetfighter, sportbike, sidecar, trike—no matter, they just want to ride and have fun.

"Our two-wheeled fraternity has power in the allure of individuality, but it gets its true strength from the diversity of numbers."



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